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A YEAR IN WESTERN FRANCE

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HÔTEL DE VILLE, LA ROCHELLE.

A YEAR IN WESTERN FRANCE

84522

BY

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF

'A WINTER WITH THE SWALLOWS' 'KITTY' 'DR JACOB' ETC.

LONDON

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ILLUSTRATION.

HÔTEL DE VILLE, LA ROCHELLE . . . . *Frontispiece*

A YEAR IN WESTERN FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

FROM NANTES TO LA ROCHELLE.

A MORE delightful little trip cannot be conceived than that I am about to describe; namely, the journey from Nantes to La Rochelle, Poitiers, and Saumur, by way of La Vendée. Not that La Vendée retains any of its most striking characteristics. The strategic roads made under Louis Philippe's reign, the railways, the cheap newspapers, have changed the face of the country, and in a measure modified the character of the people. Yet, historically speaking, there is no more interesting department in France. Every hamlet, every windmill, every brook and hillock, has its blood-stained annals; and, in spite of the prosperity now witnessed on every side, there is hardly a village without its ruined château, by turns the stronghold of Blancs or Bleus, Royalists or Republicans.

Books about La Vendée are rare; and though its little sea-side resort, Les Sables d'Olonne, is now a fashionable watering-place, with a grand hotel, a casino, and the usual accessories of a town given up to what is

amusingly called 'promenades en mer,' travellers are seldom met with off the beaten track. There are, however, two works which all tourists who propose to follow my itinerary will do well to consult. One is the last book of Vendean travels I could hear of in France—'Voyage dans la Vendée, par E. Genoude,' Paris, 1821—a work especially useful, as the author set out on purpose to go over the scenes of the Vendean war. All the ruins, all the dead, have still their witness, he writes, and from one end of the country to the other was but a vast desolation. In those days the peasant folks had a geography of their own, and instead of calling places by their names, they spoke of 'the country of La Rochejacquelein or M. Henri,' as he was familiarly called, 'the country of de Bonchamps, the country of Charette,' and so on. The author's chief sources of information were the older men who had taken part in the war; and wherever he went he picked up stories of heroism and devotion. When a man of very short stature wanted to enlist in the Vendean army, and an officer was about to measure him, the Colonel interposed. 'It is from the head to the heart we must measure a Vendean,' he said. When Charette was offered a refuge in England, he replied: 'What would become of these good fellows about me? They would perish alone; I will die in their midst.' Even the Republicans wrote of Charette—

> De Charette, passants, respectez le repos;
> Il vécut en brigand, il mourut en héros.

But our author, who speaks of the barbarians of the

Convention, is too partial to be relied upon. The companion volume I have before referred to is a very good counteractive. This is a purely historical work by M. Bonnemère, author of a well-known book, 'L'Histoire des Paysans,' and entitled 'La Vendée in 1793.' If M. Genoude detests the Bleus, M. Bonnemère detests the Blancs still more, and on no account should the one author be consulted without the other. M. Bonnemère moreover gives a graphic picture of La Vendée before the war, and certainly, after realising the state of semi-barbarism in which it was plunged, we have little difficulty in understanding the savage nature of the war and the ferocity displayed, as well on the side of the Vendean ladies and gentlemen as on that of 'les barbares de la Convention.'

Who had ever heard of La Vendée before the insurrection? Was it a province, a river, or a mountain? Was it in Brittany, in Anjou, or in Poitou? Had it historic annals, warriors, poets, great men; any of those things, in fact, which make a noise in the world? No. Without a past, without a tradition, without ennobling memories, it had been for centuries asleep; and so entirely, that when, in 1793, France invaded, thought to wake it from its apathy by the magic words *La patrie en danger*, these two words, France, *patrie*, had no meaning for La Vendée. The country was for the most part a wilderness, and agriculture consisted chiefly in the culture of rye and buckwheat. One road only, namely, that from Nantes to La Rochelle, traversed the country. Towns there were not. After the pacification of the department, it was found necessary to convert La Roche-sur-Yon

into a place of sufficient importance to be *chef-lieu*, which is still one of the dullest towns in France. The poor people lived in wretched hovels; and, as a Royalist historian describes them, knew just enough to cultivate the land, to pay the dîme docilely, and to obey the corvée. The nobles were hardly less ignorant, often unable to write, coarse-mannered, and spending their time in eating and drinking and the chase. The priests, always recruited from the peasant class, were by no means calculated to exercise an elevating influence. Fanatical, stupid, and vindictive, they were all-powerful among a superstitious population shut out from other lights; and it was mainly owing to the clergy that the Vendean war held out with such unexampled tenacity. '*L'inexplicable Vendée*,' said Barère, not sufficiently taking into account the awful threats held over the timid and the recalcitrant, and the way in which the women played into their hands. The priests and the women indeed made the war of La Vendée—a war more misrepresented, perhaps, than any other historical event. Great heroism and unexampled devotion doubtless may be cited on the part of the Vendeans; but it must ever be remembered that they were promoters of civil war, and that their hopes of success from the beginning were based on the aid of foreign invaders, invited by them to crush the country.

All travellers in La Vendée will visit Clisson, a miniature Switzerland whither the Nantais resort for pic-nics. But as I had already seen this charming country resort, I made my first halt at the little town of Montaigu, where I was awaited by kind friends who

were to give me an itinerary for the rest of my route. This is the only way to travel to the best advantage; to be able to dismiss guide-books and ordinary sources of information, for what is much more valuable and inexhaustible—namely, oral information from those who have lived all their lives on the spot. As was the case with my journey in Brittany, to be described further on, I was handed from friend to friend and acquaintance to acquaintance, throughout my tour in La Vendée and Poitou; and was thus enabled to see much more than if I had been an ordinary traveller, provided only with Murray. Moreover, herein lies the real poetry of travel. Instead of the interested welcome of hotel-keepers, kind faces greet you at every halting-place, friendly hands clasp yours, and you are conducted from place to place, not by hired cicerones who have got up a parrot-like knowledge of places and things, but by educated ladies and gentlemen who delight to do the honours of that corner of their native land in which they live. Thus it befel me, at every stage of my journey; and with unforgetable recollections of lovely scenes and historic sites, I brought away more cherished recollections still of that winning affectionate French hospitality which was lavished upon me from the beginning to the end.

There is a rustic little inn at Montaigu, which has quite a local celebrity; and, judging from its look of cleanliness and comfort, deservedly so. The hôtel Cassard, with its modest charges and pleasant people, might be an agreeable summer resort for an artist or an angler, and during the war of 1870–71 was occupied by the well-known painter, Auguste Bon-

heur, and his family. It was on the 25th of June that I arrived—season of the flowering of the vine, when the neighbouring atmosphere is impregnated with a delicate and indescribable perfume. This is a critical moment for the plant, and if rain falls in any quantity the vintage is ruined. My cicerone and host, a Vendean gentleman of great learning and Republican principles, took me for a long pleasant ramble round the ruined walls of the old town and château, ending in his gardens, where we feasted on strawberries and cherries. Montaigu lies amid very pretty scenery, and has abundant historical associations. The river, La Maine, winds amid willowed banks and park-like glades; and along the borders of the public walk is the public washing ground, the busy scene of the washer-women in the evening light making a picturesque whole. The grey old tower is almost all that remains of the fortified château built by Louis XI. with the hope of planting a firm foot in Brittany. Near the château is a well in which the Vendeans thrust dead, dying, and wounded Republican prisoners after a victory gained here. My host was present when, about twenty years ago, some bones and portions of blue cloth adhering to them were taken up. Under the château is a beautiful pleasure-ground, or so-called *Garenne*, which belonged to a member of the Convention. On the grey walls of a grotto he carved the word 'Spei'—to hope—which showed that he hoped and believed in the Republic of the future.

The scenery on every side is pastoral and poetic, with delicious little bits recalling Troyon, Daubigny, and Corot, or our own Constable—willowy, silvery-

green banks and cool brown streams; low-lying meadows, with cattle knee-deep in the grass; and avenues of tall poplars or birch opening into lovely little dells. No wildness or ruggedness or grandeur here, as in Brittany; all is lovely, quiet, poetic, and uneventful.

The farming is much like that I have described elsewhere in the Loire Inférieure. The peasants, though called *métayers*, and their farms *métairies*, are for the most part really and truly small tenant farmers, who pay a money rent for their holding, and do not farm on the half profit system, as in Italy.

Outside the Vendean cottage is a rude block of stone, hollowed out so as to form a washing-basin; and here the whole family perform their ablutions! These good people are not much in advance of the Bretons as far as some forms of cleanliness go, and a young Vendean lady told me that nothing strikes them as more ridiculous than the bourgeois habit of washing over-much; but they are cleanly in their dress, and the excellent and often-washed coarse linen worn next their skins does undoubtedly keep them in a measure clean and healthy. They also have the Breton habit of only one common sleeping-room for a whole family, and sleep on beds, shelf-like arranged, like berths in a ship's cabin. The cottages are certainly much cleaner externally than in Brittany; the usual dung-heap before the door is wanting, and bits of trellised vine, and even a flower-bed, are seen here and there. The richness of the soil is apparent everywhere. Vines, vegetables and fruit flourish, with evidently but little pains spent upon them; and these peasant folks

eat green peas, artichokes, strawberries, and other rare luxuries with us, every day.

The primitive little town of Montaigu, like Pornic in the Loire Inférieure and many others I saw in my travels, is lighted by the stars and the moon in summer and by lanterns slung on cords in winter. Even the railway has not modernised it.

Next day, after an animated breakfast party at my friend's house, we paid visits to neighbours; and I must say nothing can be more agreeable than this way of spending a long summer day. Beautiful old faïence, historic furniture, and other interesting things, are found in these pleasant country houses, and good stories were not wanting. There was in the drawing-room a superb Henri IV. sideboard, richly carved in oak, that our hostess had found in a farmhouse. Unfortunately, during the Vendean war, the heads of the eagles surmounting the top were hacked off, and it was absolutely necessary to get new heads put on. A skilful workman was found to undertake the job; but alas! when the sideboard came home, instead of the matter being mended, it had been made much worse. Some kind of nondescript bird's head had been put instead of the detested symbol of Imperialism, and remonstrance was vain. The ardently Royalist sculptor was willing to carve owls' heads, bustards' heads—anything except eagles'—and why in the name of heaven should not they do as well? At last the sideboard had to be sent to Paris, where the eagles' heads were put on without compunction. This Vendean lady, now a grandmother, told me that in her youth the only way of getting from one place to another

was on horseback. Every lady had her horse, and it was on horseback that she accomplished her shopping, her church-going, and her visiting. Now, you find nowhere in France better roads than in La Vendée.

There is one blot upon pastoral life here as well as in Brittany, and that is the hard treatment of animals. The cruel habit of separating a sucking calf from its mother, lest it should suck too much milk, prevails, and in a neat-house I visited, it was pitiable to see the cow tied up at one end of the place and the week-old calf tied up at the other, both bleating and looking at each other, making every now and then helpless little attempts to get loose. Further on I shall have to dwell on a much more cruel practice still, defacing this prosperous, peaceful, happy France, where it seems as if only the animals were badly off!

After a pleasant little stay of two days with my Vendean friends, I went to Les Sables d'Olonne, or Les Sables as it is called, thus traversing the Marais. The Marais, writes an author I have before quoted, is Venice in sabots; but a barren, unfertile, dreary Venice, indeed! The Maraichin is stronger and taller of stature than the inhabitant of the Bocage or the Plaine, the two other geographical divisions of La Vendée, to which a fourth should properly be added, namely, the islands. A very slight acquaintance with the natural features of the first three will make it clear how easy was victory to the Vendeans so long as they stayed in their own country. In those days the Bocage, the Marais, and the greater part of the Plaine, were impenetrable wildernesses to those who had not been accustomed to

them from childhood. The Bleus, whose movements were made known by certain mysterious war signals —windmills, church towers, and trees being used in this curious system of telegraphy—were lost as soon as they got off the beaten track. 'There are the Bleus; disperse yourselves, my lads,' cried the chief; and, quick as lightning, the Vendean force became invisible. Behind every furze or heather bush a soldier lay hid, who, unseen till the approach of the enemy, pounced upon them at the right moment, working fearful slaughter. For the Vendean, retreat lay open on every side; for the Republican, retreat there was none. The Vendean had food and arms at hand in every hovel; the Republican had to carry his wherever he went. No wonder that the Convention lost patience at last, not being able to understand the resistance of 'the inexplicable Vendée.'

Les Sables is aptly called. Never, I think, I saw such sands as these—so velvety smooth, so cool, so firm! This, and the bluest, warmest sea in the world, are enough to account for the great popularity of this little watering-place. But a sojourn at Les Sables in June reminded me of Egypt, Algeria, and all the hottest places I can remember. There is not a vestige of shade—not a tree, not an inch of wall, not a rock—absolutely nothing to protect the eye and the head from the burning heat and the glare. How people can go there in the summer-time I cannot conceive; yet July and August form the real season, and when I arrived the hotels were crowding fast. The town consists of a straggling line of brand new hotels, and green-shuttered, white-walled villas, mostly of the

tiniest dimensions ; a new casino and a convent, where ladies are received as boarders at six francs a day during the season, and are made very comfortable. Why, indeed, should not the nuns turn an honest penny this way as well as any other? The Sablais are a fine, sunburnt, athletic race, and the women, with their bare legs, short red petticoats, black hair, and brownish-red cheeks, are picturesque creatures, especially as they walk arm-in-arm with a swinging gait, their short, very short red skirts swinging as they go. So great is the heat, that during the day—that is to say from nine o'clock in the morning till five at night—there is nothing to do but remain in your room ; but the evenings are cool and delicious. The sands grow golden, the colour of the sea grows an intenser and yet intenser purple, little fishing-boats with orange-coloured sails lie at anchor far off; and on this, almost the longest day of the year, namely, the 26th of June, the night, when at last it does come, hardly seems night at all, so luminous is the atmosphere. People then take their sea dip, or what is called their 'promenade en mer,' not as we do, but after a much more amusing and original fashion. In the first place, they prefer it before dinner instead of a constitutional walk, and about five o'clock the business of bathing begins. Close up under the long line of houses fronting the sea stretch long lines of bathing huts, in which the bathers make their toilette, afterwards walking into the sea, a distance varying with the tide, and, on the evening I speak of, about half a quarter of a mile.

No masqueraders at Carnival time present an odder

appearance than the fashionable frequenters of Les Sables thus equipped for their daily dip. The children, quaintest little figures imaginable, in harlequin-like dress of blue and white, or pink and white, much befrilled and beflounced; the ladies, in coquettish Bloomer costumes of various-coloured serges, bordered with bright colours, in most cases the trousers only reaching just below the knee; the men in tight cuirass-like garments, shirt and drawers in one, both of the narrowest possible dimensions, leaving legs, arms and neck bare; generally of striped black and red, or of some other combination equally gay. Thus fancifully clothed, men, ladies, and children take their walks into the sea, fathers of families conducting their wives and children, young ladies and young gentlemen flirting as if at a ball, all enjoying their amphibious amusement as in any other company. A little way off the line of bathing huts were a party of men disporting themselves in Adam's dress; boys of all ages were also bathing on the rocks as unceremoniously as if they were on a desert island, and what with one thing and another, 'the human form divine' might be as profitably studied at Les Sables d'Olonne as on a wrestling-ground of ancient Greece.

It is odd that the family bathing hour should be from five to seven post meridian, and next morning, when I looked out of my window at six o'clock, not a soul was taking advantage of the deliciously cool water and solitude.

In spite of the great beauty of the late evenings and early mornings, I cannot conceive of anyone staying here during the summer more than twenty-four

hours. The hotels are dear, noisy and crowded, the glare unsupportable, and, excepting the sea-bathing, no kind of amusement is offered. Yet to this little seaside resort, flock thousands and thousands of holiday-makers, in the hottest months of the year; many marriages are made by parents and guardians, while the young people are flirting in the water; and so great is the influx of visitors that landlords are able in two months to make up for the deadness of the remaining ten. One fact is to be noticed about the hotels here—they are clean.

To journey from Les Sables to La Rochelle is to change the desert for the oasis. A greater contrast cannot be conceived than the Algerian sky, burning blue sky and brown burnt-up leeside of the one, to the blooming gardens, the cool antique arcades, the delicious freshness, and shadow of the other. La Rochelle reminds the traveller of those quaint, stately Italian towns so little changed by the march of time and progress. On the hottest day of the year you can stroll under its dusky porches as agreeably as if it were spring; and when you quit these pleasant promenades, can still find shelter in the suburban-like streets, with large gardens offering shelter to the passer-by. All is quiet, harmonious, mediæval; and the aspect of the Rochellois is in accordance with the staid yet cheerful antiquity of the place. Nowhere the stranger encounters greater courtesy and kindness than here; while instead of the over-dressed conspicuous toilettes of Nantes, you find the simplicity and elegance of the Angevines.

Never shall I forget with what a sense of relief

and delight I hailed the tranquil, home-like, Hôtel de France—the best hotel I met with during an entire year in Western France—after the bustling, unwelcoming, glaring Grand Hôtel of Les Sables. Here I was given a cool and pleasant room overshadowed by acacia trees, and looking into a well-kept garden full of trees and flowers, all so refreshing this sultry weather that I was reminded of those grateful gardens in Egypt and Algeria, which make you forget that you are in the East. The landlady—I will call her, rather, my hostess—was charming; and the servants, not over-worked, officious, and interested, but agreeable human beings with sufficient leisure to do their work cheerfully. In fact, the whole thing was one of those pleasant surprises that make up for the vast discomforts of travelling in France, even in these days.

It is a place in which you feel at home at once, and quit with regret, this antique, stately, picturesque La Rochelle. Whichever way you turn you come upon some sign of mediæval times; and nowhere in my travels have I seen more beautiful old houses than these, with their harmonious grey walls, pointed roofs, carved corbels, projecting gurgoyles, and arched windows. Evidently no wholesale demolition has been carried on here, and the new quarters are built in keeping with the old. People live after English fashion, each in their own house or hotel, so called; and through the half-open front door I caught glimpses of creepers, trees, and flowers, giving a cheerful and countrified aspect to the streets. One

superb house not mentioned in guide-books — a palace, of the time of Louis XIV.— will attract the eye of any traveller as he passes the Rue des Augustins ; and I am sorry to say that it has been so far desecrated as to be turned into a linen warehouse! Worse still, a lovely column has been barbarously cut in halves to make way for the carts that otherwise could not be conveniently turned before the front door! The pretty maid-servant—all the women are pretty here — who, seeing my longing looks as I stood at the garden gate, had offered herself as cicerone — seemed to take this piece of Vandalism much as a matter of course. The rooms are small, but the ceilings, chimney-pieces, and pillars are richly sculptured, and with very little pains might be made habitable. Instead they are piled to the top with Breton-cloth, empty wine-bottles, and packing-cases ; and who can predict that the whole building may not meet with the fate of the column? It is an architectural gem.

For even the merest tourist there is a great deal to see at La Rochelle, whilst it would be difficult to point out a town in France offering more deeply-interesting historic associations. The Hôtel de Ville of glorious memory—now, alas! being restored—the noble clock tower, the towers of St. Nicholas, and the Lanterne, lend extraordinary imposingness to the place as a whole, and are well worth studying from an architectural point of view. Towards the end of the last century La Rochelle, as well as several other towns of Saintonge, was invaded

by a host of termites or white ants, which threatened to become a public scourge. The invading enemy came in some foreign cargo, none knew how, and wrought terrible devastation in the Préfecture, the arsenal, and several neighbouring houses. Though very small, these creatures can work through the hardest wood with their mandibles, and entire houses have been undermined by their means. Neither tar, nor arsenic, nor gunpowder, have proved efficient to destroy them. They fall upon clothes, paper, pens, pencils, eating up the latter, wood and lead altogether, and destroying the former. In the bureau of the Préfecture they devoured the archives of the department, and this without leaving any outward signs of their invasion, the upper and lower leaves being always left intact. Out of doors their ravages were equally complete, every bit of wood being attacked twenty-four hours afterwards. The Hôtel de Ville escaped the termites, but has fallen into the hands of restorers, and, like every other ancient monument in France, should be seen quickly. The famous marble table, scarred by the knife destined for the first who should dare speak of surrender, is all that is left in the way of a relic to recall the iron-hearted defender of Protestantism, when Protestantism was as yet a political power in France. It was proposed during the reign of Louis Philippe to erect a statue to Guiton, the heroic mayor of La Rochelle during the famous siege, but the projectors were forbidden to carry out their idea then, and it is hardly likely that it will be revived. Yet such a statue might read a salutary lesson to those who, even in these days, discern the

necessity of religious persecution. Never did foreign enemy inflict so terrible a blow upon any country as that France inflicted upon herself when she drove the Huguenots out of the kingdom. Wherever they went they carried enterprise, industry, and character with them, thus enriching their adopted country at the expense of the one they had left behind.

It is not my intention to say more than a word about the history of La Rochelle and its memorable siege. All this is to be had for the asking, and most of us have learned the story in our childhood. I will only advise travellers to look at a little side door, now walled up, of the chapel of the Jesuit brotherhood, formerly the church of St. Marguerite. Through this door, on the 1st of November, 1628, Richelieu and Louis the Thirteenth passed, when about to celebrate mass in honour of the act of pardon. The town had been occupied on the 30th of October. The soldiers were seized with pity and horror on seeing the famished multitude who fell upon them, seizing the bread carried on their persons. The streets and public places were covered with withered corpses none had found courage to bury. The half of the population had perished of hunger. A mother had fed on the body of her daughter. A father had nourished his son with his own blood. Thus fearfully does Henri Martin close his description of the siege. Guiton was at first exiled, with ten of the principal citizens, but was afterwards recalled by Richelieu, and was put in command of a war-ship. After the siege the Rochelois turned their attention to commerce. Three thousand inhabitants quitted their

homes on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, carrying their talents and their industry with them. The Revolutionary ideas of 1789 took immediate root here, and the national guard of the city set out to fight the Vendeans, but were defeated.

In the Public Library are some beautiful etchings of the modern town and quaint old engravings of the old. There is also a great number of curious prints of the siege. The reading-room is spacious, and the leisurely traveller will do well to spend an hour here; also to take a turn in the museum, picture-gallery, and botanic gardens, for La Rochelle has all these on a small scale. This is another instance of the principle of decentralisation, so usual in France and so rare with us. The resources of the third and fourth rate French towns often put those of far more important English towns to the blush.

It is a delicious little sea trip of an hour and a half to the Ile de Ré, familiar to readers of English history—a half Eastern, half Italian island, formerly covered with wood, but now entirely cleared, and devoted partly to vineyards and partly to market-gardens. The figs and pears are celebrated, and are exported to foreign markets. The cream also is of high repute. There are besides salt marshes, producing considerable quantities of salt. The Ile de Ré formed part of the dowry of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and on her marriage with Henry the Second passed into the hands of the English.

The steamer stops at St. Martin's, a little town with houses in yellow, brown, and pink stucco, front doors always wide open, showing an inner garden and

trellised vines, making breezy shades at every corner. Some of the houses are handsomely built, and remind one of Smyrna. There are flowers on the window-sills, flowers in the doorways, flowers on the roof; something to remind you of summer everywhere. The refreshing aspect of St. Martin's does not end here. The town possesses numerous little squares, groves, and planted walks of lime and acacia, whilst the country peeps in everywhere. The little port, with its pink and yellow walled, green-shuttered houses and trailing vines, reflected in the clear green sea, is a bit of Venice. An artist would call it 'malerisch,' or paintable. There is a Protestant church here, and the element is said to be strong, though Protestants and Catholics now live in harmony together.

The Ile de Ré is shut off from the outer world by an hour and a half of sea-journey—pleasant enough on a summer day, but by no means so in winter, when two hours or more of rain, wind, and tossing sea have to be endured in the transit, which is sometimes impracticable. The island is strongly fortified close to the sea, and the only dreary feature in the scenery indeed is a State prison, in which several hundred political offenders of the Commune are confined, with, alas! small chance of escape. In fine weather it is worth while making this little excursion, if only to see La Rochelle from the sea. The exquisitely soft grey walls of the town, the imposing spire of the Lanterne, and the picturesque Tour de la Grosse Horloge—all stand out in bold relief against the bright blue sky. Some way off the harbour rises from the middle of the sea a tall, ominous-looking tower, painted black, and

written across in large white letters the memorable name, 'RICHELIEU.'

I was warmly welcomed by friends' friends to La Rochelle, and in the evening we used to amuse ourselves in watching the fair which had just been inaugurated there. It is characteristic of the French mind that when one kind of amusement is not to be had, it will seize upon any other as a *pis-aller*. Thus the annual fair of La Rochelle happening at a time of the year when nothing else was going on, came as a godsend to the pleasure-loving Rochellois—witness the crowds that flocked thither every evening from seven till near midnight. Rich and poor, educated and ignorant, young and old, were here assembled, listening to the band, watching the fire-eaters and merry-go-rounds, the lottery-drawing, the target-shooting, and the various spectacles catered for them. For the nonce, the fair was the rendezvous of friends and neighbours; and, in spite of the large predominance of the working classes, all was quiet and good behaviour. 'Drunkenness is very rarely seen in the public streets,' said one of my acquaintances to me. 'The fact is, the poor people have their vines and their own cask or two of pure wine, and wherever you find this to be the case, you find sobriety.' Doubtless the politeness and good manners of the French working classes may partly be attributed to their temperate habits, and partly also to the fact that, as was the case at the fair, they take their amusements in company of their betters.

CHAPTER II.

POITIERS.

IT was with no little reluctance that I quitted La Rochelle, certainly one of the most beautiful towns in France, and also one of the cleanest. At Poitiers, as far as creature comforts go, the traveller will fare badly if he betakes himself to either of the two hotels that I tried, named the Hôtel du Palais and Hôtel des Trois Piliers, both being noisy, dirty and uncomfortable, and the former being dear also. Worse hotels I never remember throughout my travelling experience; and only one word of recommendation can I give them, namely, that the beds were good. Certainly French *genius* does not run in the line of hotel keeping; and I have been led by several experiences to conclude that excessive love of amusement is the reason why. Take, for instance, the following anecdote, to be backed up by another later on. At the Hôtel de Trois Piliers before mentioned, all the work was done by a superannuated waiter, two old women servants, one strong young man to sweep the bedrooms, and a boy; and whilst this poor staff of domestics were working like galley-slaves, with a temperature of 90° in the shade, the owners of the house were lolling back in garden chairs, gossiping and giggling with any one

idle enough to join them. This incessant chatter and laughter close under your windows all day long was bad enough; but what else should they devise at ten o'clock at night, by way of a little pleasant excitement, but fireworks! I had gone to bed early, being much tired of the heat and my railway journey; under my room were a nun and another lady, who had retired to rest early also. I was just going off to sleep, when bang! bang! bang! off went a series of fireworks, with detonations as loud as those of a pistol or gun. This lasted for twenty minutes, accompanied by screams of laughter from the landlord, landlady, and their friends; and as it seemed likely to go on for hours longer, I at last put my head out of the window, and begged to be allowed to go to sleep. The fireworks ceased, but the chatter continued; and the next night, in spite of my remonstrance, again I was aroused by fireworks, let off close under my windows. This was more than human patience could put up with. I went downstairs and delivered myself of an indignant speech, which I do not for a moment imagine will save future travellers from similar inconveniences. French hotel-keepers cannot be too often reminded that such things, and the want of cleanliness in their houses, are injurious to themselves individually and collectively. Rich people, who like their ease when travelling abroad, will spend their money elsewhere so long as French hotels remain as they are. I was struck on this journey with the paucity of English travellers everywhere; and, certainly, I do not wonder at it, seeing the badness of the hotels.

The ancient city of Poitiers wore a festive look when I arrived. An Agricultural Congress had just been opened, and the balls, concerts, and fêtes of all descriptions held in its honour, were attracting visitors in large numbers. It was Sunday, and, as the evening drew on, thousands of holiday-makers were pouring into the beautiful public gardens, where music, fireworks, and illuminations awaited them. All the afternoon the streets had swarmed with peasant-folks, making purchases as if it were market-day—toys, straw-hats, and clothes, seeming to be the principal objects of attraction.

The Poitevine is a picturesque and dignified creature, with her high white coiffe, something like the historical head-dress of Eleanor of Aquitaine, gown bluest of the blue, or greenest of the green, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and gay little shawl, its long ends crossed in front, and hanging down over the long bib apron. Doubtless this striking costume is gradually dying out, for in my walks I met a marriage procession in which the bride, though evidently of the peasant class, was dressed in white and bridal veil like an ordinary young lady! The bridegroom wore the blue blouse of the countrymen here; and after the pair, came about twenty couples arm in arm, the women partly in Poitevine costume, the men uniformly in blouse. The road was several inches deep in dust, and probably etiquette forbade the bride to raise her skirt, which was gradually getting brown up to the waist. These peasants are fine, manly-looking fellows, and far brisker in appearance than the Bretons. The women are handsome, and all have a well-to-do,

cleanly, independent look. They are, in fact, rich, each possessing his bit of land; and, generally speaking, sober in their habits.

In spite of the uncomfortableness of the hotels it was impossible for me to hurry away from Poitiers. The town itself is beautifully and romantically situated, on green heights, a little river, the Clain, running at its feet. The dull and empty streets spoken of by Murray wore a very lively appearance during my stay, owing to the Agricultural Congress, but at all times I should say Poitiers must be a cheerful place. It is undergoing considerable changes, and will doubtless ere many years lose much of its antique appearance; fortunately its wonderfully beautiful old church of Notre Dame is in a state of excellent preservation.

Here, as at La Rochelle, people live English-wise, in separate dwellings instead of flats, and most of the houses have well-kept gardens, which give quite a countrified look to the place. Wherever you find a bit of sunny wall you find a trailing vine, giving a warm, southern look. The Poitevins have an affable way with them, and are always ready to afford information to the enquiring stranger. They must be far less clerical than the Bretons, for I saw here evidence of what is not found in rich, populous Nantes; namely, lay-teaching on a handsome scale for young ladies of the middle and upper ranks of society. In the former town, as I shall mention further on, lay schools have no chance, so crushing is the competition of the convents; but at Poitiers is a large ladies' school, rich enough to keep a carriage for

fetching its little day scholars, as is done by the convents. It rejoiced my heart to see this; and it is interesting to know that a young lady of Poitiers, who recently passed her Bachelor of Arts and Science examination, stood before all the men who went up with her. I hear of nun-teachers putting on secular dress for the purpose of passing the examination necessary for the teacher's first and second diploma; but this is a commercial movement, and would never have been thought of except for the worldly necessities of the case.

I visited the time-honoured library in the University, famous in the days of Rabelais, where the sub-librarian received me very cordially, and told me with infinite pride of the fifty rooms, filled with books, it contained. The reading-room is spacious and well arranged, but my guide informed me that polished floors, carpets, and other luxuries, were shortly to be introduced. There were only three or four readers, and I thought what a pleasant time of it these librarians must have, provided they are book lovers. Here at Poitiers, for a library of 50,000 volumes, a staff of three persons is paid by the town. The town of Poitiers is very rich, said my informant, and can thus afford to be generous. Except to read the books, one cannot conceive of any occupation these gentlemen find; and I must say the chief librarian looked the picture of bibliographic enjoyment as he sat poring over an antique volume in his cool, pleasant, quiet room. He received me with great politeness, and showed me the gem of his collection, namely, an exquisitely illuminated

missal, the work of René, king of Anjou and Sicily. The good king René was without doubt a genius; and this book, which was executed for his second wife Jeanne de Laval, is a really beautiful work of art. The last of the Troubadours, as he has also been called, introduced carnations into Anjou and Poitou, for which all lovers of flowers should be grateful. Nowhere do you see these glorious flowers in such perfection as in this part of France; the most delicate perfumes, the richest colours, making it the crowning glory of flower-beds.

No words can give any idea of the sombre antique majesty of Notre Dame, the first among the numerous architectural splendours of Poitiers. It should be seen in glowing summer weather as I saw it, when its walls of darkest, richest grey stand out in sharp relief against a deep purple sky at noontide; and, as the day wears on, the whole building gains a more imposing majesty still, bathed as it is in warm amber light. On first entering I could almost have fancied myself in a mosque of Cordova or Cairo, so strongly do the decorations of pillars and roof recall such oriental associations. Yellow, blue, and red predominate, the paint being laid on in bands, with but little artistic effect. The nave has a barrel roof, and there is little in the interior worthy of note, except a most pathetic mediæval Entombment carved in wood, the apostles being evidently portraits of Poitevine peasants of the time. But the exterior of Notre Dame is unforgetable. I know of nothing more imposing than its western façade—pinnacles, niched statues, arcades, and bas-reliefs—all quaint and touching in design, and

all fortunately in good preservation. One female head M. Viollet Le Duc points out as strongly illustrating the Byzantine element in Poitevine architecture; and his remarks on this subject are full of interest, not only to the lover of architecture, but to the student of ethnology. It is impossible for those who have visited the monuments of Poitiers and Saintonge, he writes, not to acknowledge the relations existing between the ornamental architecture of these provinces and certain illustrations of Saxon MSS., and further also, certain sculptures that these northern people left in their tombs. The façade of Notre Dame of Poitiers does not recall the pseudo-Byzantine art of Provence, Languedoc, and Cluny. The Poitevine artists were affected by other influences, evidently oriental. Those who really care about architecture should stay at Poitiers at least a week, for otherwise they can but inadequately study the various pieces of stone history here offered to them. Next in interest after Notre Dame come St. Radegonde, also Romanesque, St. Hilaire, and the most ancient of all, St. Jean. This last is one of the oldest Christian monuments in France. But no mere cataloguing will give any idea of the great interest of Poitiers, architecturally and historically speaking. Guide-books say that the principal sights may be visited in a few hours. Such, however, would be a very unsatisfactory way of seeing one of the most curious towns of France. But ordinary travellers seem to find a day long enough for any place, and I remember meeting an Englishman at Saumur who, having arrived that morning and 'done' Fontevrault,

was considering how he should get through the two hours remaining on his hands before starting for Bordeaux! Yet Saumur is full of interest.

Poitiers is being fast modernised, and a brand-new Préfecture confronts a brand-new Mairie, both admirable in their way, built in white freestone with slated roofs, in the Italian style. Old streets are being pulled down to make way for the new, and in a few years' time the antiquity of the place will be centred in a few old buildings only. Opposite one of these, the Palais de Justice, is now the pretentious-looking Hôtel du Palais; thus it is everywhere—vulgarity and pretension staring art and antiquity out of countenance. The Palais de Justice is happily in no need of restoration, and is imposing in the extreme, with its spacious hall, La Salle des Pas Perdus, and unique mantle-piece. This mantle-piece surmounts three fire-places, an open stair at each corner leading to the tribune above. The effect is curious and magnificent, the chimney-pieces being richly carved and of elegant design. It is, indeed, one of the splendours of Poitiers, but no description will give the least idea of it.

The cathedral has little interest except that it was founded by our Henry the Second, and painters will do well to save their eyes and their interest for the fine old Romanesque churches which abound here.

Whilst at Poitiers it may be worth while to walk into the Library, not to consult the ancient chronicles about Charles Martel and Abderahman, nor Froissart about King John and the Black Prince; but St. Jerome's Life of St. Hilaire, that ardent antagonist of

Arianism, who ended his labours as Bishop of Poitiers. The holy man whose life St. Jerome has written so eloquently, belonged to one of the noble pagan families of Romanised Gaul, and died here in the year A.D. 368.

At the age of fifteen, says St. Jerome, he retired into the wilderness to meditate and pray. He was variously tempted of the devil, who one day jumped on his back and mocked him. He cut his hair, writes St. Jerome, once a year. He slept on the bare ground and a bed of rushes till his death, never washing or exchanging his garment till it fell to pieces. From his twentieth to his twenty-seventh year, he ate during one half of the period a pint measure of lentils per diem, steeped in cold water; during the other half, dry bread with muddy water. From his twenty-seventh to his thirtieth year he lived on wild herbs and raw roots. The next five years he ate six ounces of barley bread daily and a half-boiled turnip, unless the turnip was mixed up with the bread. Finding that his eyesight was failing and his body was afflicted with weakness and scrofula, he added olives to the former food, and till his sixty-third year kept up this sobriety, never tasting besides either apples or vegetables, or anything of the kind. Then, although he saw that his body was worn out, and he thought himself near death, he abstained from his sixtieth to his eightieth year altogether from bread, and had such fervour of mind that he seemed as if fresh come to the service of God at that time when other men drop off. He ate a broth of flour and bruised olives, making in all hardly five ounces of food and drink;

thus fulfilling his days, never even breaking his fast before sunset, even when he was sick.

'My soul,' he said, just before dying, 'thou hast served Christ for seventy years, and dost thou fear to die now?'

In these days the Bishops of Poitiers serve God quite differently; and the costliest, handsomest, and most delightful country-seat, near an episcopal town, is sure to be the bishop's summer palace. Other times, other manners!

I should have left Poitiers with great regret had the hotels been moderately good; as it is, English travellers are in duty bound to complain when they meet with dirt, noise, discomfort, and over-worked, slave-driven servants, who grumble at fees, even after all so-called service is charged for in the bill. At the Hôtel des Trois Piliers, on a nice calculation, visitors are allowed three hours only for repose. The house is a Babel of every imaginable noise up till midnight; loud bells ringing, master and servants talking, laughing, and screaming under the traveller's windows, &c. At three o'clock—is it to be believed?—these poor, worn-out servants wake up everybody by being obliged to wake up themselves and water the garden!

'Taking mine ease at my inn' is problematic in this part of France, and the wonder is that people ever travel here at all.

CHAPTER III.

THROUGH THE VENDEAN BOCAGE TO SAUMUR.

I HAD the coupé to myself in a pleasant five hours' drive by diligence from Poitiers to Parthenay, the driver—a fine old man, with the head of a Roman emperor and teeth white as ivory—entertaining me with interesting information all the way. For an hour and a half we were traversing the Plain of Bas Poitou—a rich, well-cultivated, open country, with corn and vines in abundance, and a general appearance of thrift and well-being. Everyone here possesses a bit of land—has, in fact, what the French call 'un avoir'—and the natural consequences are a persistent economy, apt to degenerate into selfishness and avarice, but necessarily habits of rigid sobriety and self-respect. My driver told me of neighbours of his own possessing an income of two thousand francs (£80) yearly, who yet worked as hard as any; and want is rare. Land in these parts is fertile, but not nearly so valuable as in some places near—Niort, for example, where the price reaches 12,000 francs per hectare, that is to say, nearly £500 for two acres and a half; while on the Plain land sells for as little as 2,000 francs a hectare, when in a state of poor or imperfect cultivation.

We find here no buckwheat as in Brittany. 'Everyone eats good white bread,' said my informant with pride; 'aye, and washes it down with a glass of good pure wine from his own vintage, too!' As soon as we entered the Bocage the scene changed. No more wide sweeps of corn, maize, and oats; no more vineyards on a large scale; no more unbroken lines stretching as far as the eye could reach. Instead rise forests like purple clouds in the distance, turreted châteaux peeping statelily from amid clustering woods; small patches of cultivated land interspersed with long stretches of barren heath and brushwood—waste lands, in fact, still waiting to be cleared. The process of clearing is so expensive that a great part of the Bocage still remains in its primitive condition, in spite of the good roads and railways. Bits of scenery here and there reminded me of Sussex, whilst the villages had a clean, comfortable look; not to be compared to an English village, yet immeasurably superior to those in Brittany. The people are well-dressed, good-looking, and manly, and, it is hardly necessary to say, independent in their bearing; nay, free and easy to a degree never found among the English working classes.

On reaching Parthenay I found the place all alive, it being fair day. Costume in La Vendée, as everywhere else, is fast dying out, yet the high square head-dress of white muslin, gay stuff dresses with leg-of-mutton sleeves, and white chemisettes, are still adhered to by the women. They wear black gauze veils thrown over their high coiffe in sign of mourning, giving them a dignified Spanish look. Parthenay is

rarely visited by tourists people tell me, and the inn certainly was not inviting. I shall never forget the astonishment of the little maid when I called three times for a further supply of water, the water-jug being of the smallest possible dimensions. 'Do all English people drink as much water as Madame?' asked the girl in amazement, which did not diminish when I explained to her that the water was required not for drinking, but for ablution, and that in England it was the custom to wash one's body every day! She most likely thought me mad, and assured me, moreover, that I was the first English lady who had ever visited the inn.

Parthenay is as full of historical associations as any town in La Vendée. After the taking of Saumur by the Royalists, they marched on to Parthenay, under the leadership of Lescure, burning, pillaging, and destroying. Not being able to hold the place, and the principal citizens having fled to St. Maixent, Lescure carried off their wives and children as prisoners. Parthenay was afterwards taken by Westermann, and, wonderful to relate, between the Blancs and the Bleus, still escaped entire destruction. It is a very pretty, picturesque place, with wood, and water, and grey ruins. Of course it is also very primitive. No gas in the streets; no modern improvements in the houses; neither bells, nor trays, nor any other useful inventions of our day. The maid brought up my dinner by arms-full, and it is astonishing how much can be carried by arms unused to trays. Next morning I was up and off by the five o'clock diligence for Bressuire. Very pleasant is such a mode of travelling these sweet summer mornings, if you have

secured a seat in the coupé. The country we passed through was not picturesque or varied, but interesting only from an agricultural point of view. In some places, especially around Bressuire, you see in vogue the primitive method of burning the herbage in order to improve the soil. It was now the hay-making season, and we had the delicious scent of fresh hay all the way, with breaths of wild honeysuckle and eglantine. In the cornfields were splendid crops of wild flowers, mulleins and corn-cockle, saintfoin, and, prettiest of all, the incomparable *bluet* or cornflower, blue, white, and purple, or pale rose colour; then there are in the hedgerows the brilliant *geranium glomeratus*, the large-belled campanula, the wild blue larkspur, salvias, marigolds, foxgloves, and a brilliant rose-coloured wild pea. Fruit abounds as well as flowers. I bought some cherries at Parthenay, and for one sou the vendor was pouring such quantities into my lap that I begged him to stop. A sou's-worth was enough to last a week!

Bressuire is a clean brand-new town, re-built, like so many others in La Vendée, because towns were needed. It suffered as much as Parthenay during the Vendean wars, and only a picturesque ruined château, now being repaired by the owner, remains to tell of past grandeur and misfortune. These new, spick and span Vendean towns, each with crumbling tower and walls, appeal strongly to the imagination, and bring home to us the completeness of the destruction that befel them; as we pass from one to the other we see precisely the same state of things; there is nothing

left of the past but a handful of ruins left standing, amid streets, squares, and churches, fresh as those of a newly-created village in Algeria. War had indeed turned the country into a desert, but no portion of France now wears a more prosperous look. The peasants mostly possess the soil, and increase their wealth every year. Agriculture is making advances, although, of course, slowly; and whilst material well-being advances in a rapidly ascending scale, habits of ease and luxury do not by any means keep pace with it. What would these Vendean peasant proprietors say if they could see our country folks dressed for church on Sunday, the men in black cloth, the young women with flowers in their bonnets, dresses made in the newest fashion, and often having kid gloves and silk umbrellas? It would be difficult to make them believe that after all, this finery meant nothing; that these well-dressed English peasants possessed not so much as a five-pound note in the savings' bank, or a pig in the stye. In France the peasant proprietors or small tenant farmers stick to their blouse, their wives to the black stuff dress and coiffe, and it never occurs to them to change the fashion of their grand-parents.

Another point strikes an English traveller forcibly as he journeys through this smiling Vendean landscape. Never by any chance whilst in the open road, or in shady by-path or lane, does he encounter any one belonging to the middle or upper ranks; no pony-carriage full of laughing girls, as in merry England; no nursery maid with her young charges; no squire or squiress bent on charitable errands; no idlers enjoying a ramble. The only figures in the peaceful scene are

men or women hard at work in the fields, or perhaps the dismal figure of a priest, as he wends his ways to perform mass or vespers. This total absence of the educated or *bourgeois* element—an absence as strongly marked in Brittany as in La Vendée—more than anything else distinguishes French from English country life. The smiling vicarages and villas, the rose-embosomed cottages, are wanting; you see nothing but a straight line of bare little habitations and a church, making up what is called a village, or, at wide intervals, a stately château, inhabited by M. le Marquis or M. le Comte, for perhaps two months in the year. No wonder, under the circumstances, that in the heart of the country, hygiene and sanitary science remain much as they were fifty years ago; that no kind of sympathy exists between the peasant and the middle-classes; and that thus whenever a war or any national calamity happens, there is nothing to bind the masses together.

Even the country doctor, next to the country clergyman, often the friend, confidant and benefactor of English rural populations, has no place here. The nuns, with their wholesale quackery—apparently gratuitous, but you may be sure handsomely paid for in some way or other—drive out the country doctor as efficaciously as bees some intruding wasp. It is literally impossible for a medical man to gain his living in these French provinces, where convents abound, and an anecdote I shall have occasion to cite further on will bring out more fully the evils of this system. In towns, of course, a doctor can just manage to live, because in towns there will always be a certain num-

ber of people too intelligent and too much instructed to believe that a 'lettre d'obédience' signed by the bishop of the diocese is worth a medical diploma. But in the country it is quite otherwise, and must be so.

Saumur is an elegant little town, with pretty white and slate-roofed houses, each standing in its garden, where oleanders, magnolias, pomegranates, and other tropical flowers are now in full flower. Its site on the Loire is almost as beautiful as that of Angers; and in the comfortable Hôtel Budan, facing the river, even a fastidious traveller can settle down to a few days' quiet enjoyment. A couple of splendid bridges span the Loire, and these, during the war of 1870–1, it was intended to blow up on the approach of the Prussians. The enemy did not come, however, so fortunately the gay, gracious little town was preserved. Saumur itself need not detain the traveller long, but it is a good resting place, from whence Fontevrault and other places may be visited. Moreover, good hotels are so scarce in France, that when found, we had better enjoy them as long as we can. Historically, Saumur is noteworthy. Once as Protestant as it could be, it is now but faintly leavened with the old leaven, and the principal business carried on is the manufacture of rosaries. The princely mansions and villas outside the town all belong to rich rosary manufacturers; and though there is a Protestant church, a small proportion of the inhabitants only are of that denomination. Up till the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Saumur was a flourishing town of 25,000 souls; it now possesses 13,000 only, and no commerce except in

bead-making as before mentioned. Life and animation are afforded by the Cavalry School, which is no doubt answerable for the saying,

Fait-on toujours l'amour à Saumur?

It looks, indeed, a love-making place, so smiling, gay, and coquettish are its suburban streets, for town there is none; the country has crept in everywhere, and you cannot for a moment lose yourself in a dreary congeries of roofs and walls.

Murray has the following paragraph, which will most likely escape notice unless attention is drawn to it:—'Near the convent attached to the church of Notre Dame des Ardilliers is the Hospice de la Providence. Attended by sisters of charity, a portion of the patients, including the insane, are lodged in cells and vast dormitories in the cliffs beyond.' Now, had it not been for friends on the spot anxious to show me whatever was characteristic of Saumur, I should never have paid any attention to this paragraph; but as it is, I advise all travellers to present themselves at the convent door above-mentioned, and politely ask permission to see the former hospital. The sick, the aged, and the orphan are no longer housed Troglodyte-wise in caves and cellars, a new hospital having been built for them since the war; but will it be believed that, up to that time, no other accommodation was offered than cave-dwellings! I shall have much more to say of these further on. Meantime I will describe what the mis-named 'Hospice de la Providence,' only abandoned three or four years ago, is like.

Picture to yourselves, then, at your feet, this shin-

ing, white, joyous-looking town of Saumur, the wide and clear-flowing Loire stretching between green hills on either side, the whole forming as pleasant a prospect as can well be. Close below, so close that you might, from your airy perch, drop a pebble into their garden, is the convent of the sisters, a mass of buildings, with flowers climbing up the walls, fruit and vegetables growing in abundance, signs of prosperity and the good things of this world everywhere. Part of this convent is occupied as a boarding-house for gentlewomen, who pay for accommodation according to their means, and doubtless bring a pretty penny to the community. The boarding-houses always fill, for living within the convent walls has many advantages. Firstly, you get more for your money than elsewhere; as the sisters, doing business on a large scale, can afford more than ordinary boarding-house keepers; secondly, if you reproach yourself for past sins, you feel surer of salvation among these holy women than elsewhere; thirdly, evil report—that enemy so dreaded of Frenchwomen—can say nothing against any lady who lives in a convent. Thus the nuns no sooner open a boarding-house than it fills to overflowing, and every day fresh candidates for the privilege knock at their doors.

Now turn your face from these scenes, so suggestive of material well-being and enjoyment of life, to the asylum in which the sick, aged and infirm poor were housed till a few years back. How they ever got to the top of this rocky eminence it is hard to conceive; but of one thing we may be sure, once up, they never got down again. In the sides of the rock,

called here *tuffeau*, and which is yellow chalk rock, are doors and iron gates opening into far-stretching cavernous passages and chambers, only lighted and ventilated by the door, and such subterranean habitations formed what, in cruel irony, was called the 'Hospice de la Providence.' As you stand on the threshold of these gloomy, chill, sunless, ghastliest of human habitations, the mind recoils in horror from the picture the imagination calls up. Hither, with less of light and air than was accorded to prisoners in uncivilized times, were brought little children, old men and women, and, worse still, the sick and the insane. Without any means of ventilation or warming, with only the glimmer of light and breath of air afforded by the open door in fine weather, these poor creatures were prepared by this living entombment for the much less terrible one to come.

Those of the aged and not too decrepit were permitted to creep on to the terrace outside, where a few flowers and shrubs had been planted. They were even dragged down to chapel on Sundays and fête days. But of course the far greater number, once placed in these caverns, remained there till death released them from their misery. It was edifying to hear the nun discourse on this topic. 'Nothing,' she said, 'is a greater mistake than to suppose that caves are cold in winter or hot in summer. Ventilation is not wanted, nor firing either, for nowhere else do you get so equal a temperature. Then as to light—did it not come in from the door? and was not the door always open, except in bad weather? Of course those whose beds lay far back got less light than

others, but they were so well looked after, they wanted for nothing, they were so happy!' Thus the nun—childish, conceited, and ignorant, as all nuns must necessarily be—prattled on, and we left her at the door of her comfortable parlour, looking on the flower-garden, rejoicing that at last the municipality of Saumur had placed the sick and infirm poor elsewhere. There is no reasoning with a nun. She sticks to her text to the last, and if she finds out that you are a Protestant, feels infected for days after; if an English Protestant, worst of all. For do not English people wash their bodies, and is not washing the body indecent, and as such forbidden by the Church? In spite of their exquisitely white hoods and neck-handkerchiefs, nuns must of necessity be as dirty as human beings can well be, seeing in what abhorrence they regard the notion of stripping naked to perform daily ablutions. A bath, indeed, is regarded by them as something appertaining to Anti-Christ, and as such banished the convent. The priests appear as dirty as they are, which is all the difference, the black clothes they wear, like those of St. Hilary of Poitiers, till they come to pieces, not being set off, as in the case of the nuns, by white hood and kerchief. We must speak of things as we find them!

Every English child, when poring over Mrs. Markham, longs to see Fontevrault, the last resting-place of the Plantagenets, most likely wondering how it was that they cared to be buried there. We overlooked the fact in those early days, that the Plantagenet kings were French at heart, and most likely

loved a square inch of their native land better than all England put together. An omnibus takes you to Fontevrault in an hour and a half, and a very pretty drive it is, along the banks of the Loire. On one side rise the green heights of Saumur, Dampierre and Souzé, crowned by their châteaux and modern villas; on the other the river flowing quietly between verdant, low-lying hills and rushy banks plumed with sallows as in my native Suffolk.

Fontevrault Abbey is now a state prison, and the church being enclosed within the prison walls, is not seen without a formal application to the director. We of course obtained admittance, and after being let through various passages were conducted to a side chapel in the church, where lie four recumbent statues, viz. of Henry the Second and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard Cœur de Lion, and Isabelle d'Angoulême, his second wife. These monuments are in good preservation, and so placed as to allow of being well studied. They are wonderfully pathetic and impressive, and were evidently intended to be portraits. The statue of Eleanor of Aquitaine is of wood, the others of stone; and all are painted, the drapery in blue and red. The figures of the two men, especially that of Richard, are gigantic. Eleanor of Aquitaine lies in an easy attitude, reading a book of prayer; the nun-like figure of Isabelle d'Angoulême is dwarfed by comparison with that of her giant husband, and is of great tenderness and delicacy. The late Emperor Napoleon was half disposed to permit the transfer of these tombs to England, but surely they ought to remain where they are. English tra-

vellers can visit them easily enough, and we have no reasonable ground for proposing such a request. The churches of Saumur are very interesting, as affording examples of the Angevine and Plantagenet style of architecture. St. Pierre has a domical vault, and chapel hollowed niche-wise out of the thickness of the walls, as seen at La Trinité at Angers. The principle of the domical vaults should be mastered by all travellers in this part of France. The ancient church of Notre Dame of Nantilly, built on the site of a Druids' college, is interesting as a specimen of Norman architecture, and contains a tablet to the memory of the nurse of King René of Anjou and Sicily, to one 'who nourished two children of France,' as the wording goes. The Hôtel de Ville on the Quay—a most elegant little building in black and white stone—contains a museum, rich in Celtic and Gallo-Roman remains, found in the department. There are also dolmens within a walk of Saumur, and altogether it is a place in which several days may be quietly but agreeably spent. This is one of the cleanest, friendliest, and prettiest little towns in France.

The fair had followed me from La Rochelle to Saumur, and had gained an extra attraction in the person of a charlatan, whom I must describe. He was indeed the cream of charlatans, and never shall I forget the imposing effect of his red and yellow gilded coach—a lord mayor's coach in miniature—gaily caparisoned white pony, and three musicians, two trumpeters and one drummer, in bright scarlet cloaks and broad hats with scarlet streamers, who sat perched on the top. As the charlatan's proceedings

have something to do with my narrative, I will relate them from the beginning. It happened to be market day at Saumur, and about nine o'clock in the morning, just when the town was fullest of peasant folks, the little gilded coach with its trumpeters and drummer was drawn up in a convenient spot, almost opposite my hotel windows. The way in which the charlatan went to work was surprisingly ingenious. Firstly, then, he turned over the leaves of a herbal, showing large gaily coloured prints of such field-flowers and herbs as are largely sold by herbalists for medicinal purposes in France. Then with frequent intervals, during which the trumpets and the drum played their loudest, he dilated on the unfailing medicines and medicaments he had invented by means of them. This went on for almost half an hour, but when a tolerable company had collected, my charlatan had recourse to 'metal more attractive.' He now unsheathed a large polished knife, as large as a carving-knife, and after flourishing it for some time, deliberately bared his arm to his elbow, and made a large gash on the fleshy inner part, between the wrist and the elbow; of course the wound bled, but such was the object with which it was made. Then taking out a box of his own ointment, and getting a stander-by to help him in bandaging it, the arm was bound up, the trumpets and the drum played their loudest and merriest, a bottle of wine was divided among master and men, and between music, drinking, and of course a large amount of talking, some time elapsed, during which the cure had worked. When at length the bandage was untied, lo and behold, hardly a trace of

the wound remained, so effectually had the physician healed himself!

But the peasant folks were as hard to convince as St. Thomas, and again and again that long, broad-bladed knife had to be flourished, again and again incisions had to be made and healed before a farthing flew into the charlatan's coffers. He stopped the music a dozen times with a signal of his imposing-looking hand adorned with rings, but to no purpose. At last, when he must have so mangled himself as to be sore for weeks after, popular incredulity yielded. One person being found daring enough to purchase his wares, a dozen, scores, nay hundreds, were ready to follow him ; and when I left Saumur at one o'clock post meridian every soul in the place seemed bent on procuring one of the miraculous pots of ointment or phials temptingly wrapped up in pink paper.

It was curious to observe the effect of a crowd upon a French mind. As I have before mentioned, the Hôtel Budan is excellent, clean, quiet, reasonable, and well-conducted. Yet so inquisitive and amusement-loving is the nature of every French man, woman, and child, that no sooner were the charlatan's trumpeters and gilded carriage attracting the multitude than first the cook-boy of the hotel, then the cook, then the under-waiters, then the head-waiters, and finally the master himself, followed his example, till the whole household had started out to see what was going on.

There was no harm in this ; it gave me an agreeable idea of the relations between master and servants ; but as I had ordered lunch, bill, and clothes

from the laundry at twelve o'clock, in order to be ready for starting at one, there was an inconvenient side to the question. Half past twelve came—no lunch, no bill, no clean linen ; and at last, at ten minutes before one, after ringing several times, I succeeded in making some one hear. One waiter ran into the kitchen to find me something to eat, another went off to the laundress to get the clothes, a third fetched in the master to make out my bill, and by dint of extra speed I managed just not to miss my train. 'We have all been so taken up with that good man there, that is why you were forgotten,' said one of the waiters pleasantly to me ; and of course no one under the circumstances could offer a remonstrance. But the incident throws a light on French character, and explains many of their failures in commercial undertakings as in others. *Il faut s'amuser* is the guiding maxim of existence ; and if no better amusement comes in the way, why let us watch a charlatan cut holes in his flesh and mend them up again !

The history of Saumur begins with a college of Druids, which existed where the old church of St. Nantilly now stands. In 928 St. Absalon established himself here, having carried off by stratagem the relics of St. Florent from the monks of St. Philibert de Monier. Thibault, Count of Blois, founded a rich abbey in memory of St. Absalon. Geoffrey Martel began the construction of the castle in 1040 ; and from early times Saumur, on account of its charming surroundings and sunny atmosphere, became a favourite resort of French kings. Saint Louis and the good king René of Anjou and Sicily here gave

splendid fêtes. Louis XI. embellished Notre Dame of Nantilly, and it was in his reign that the beautiful little Hôtel de Ville, still in excellent preservation, was built. Henry IV. made the great Protestant leader, Duplessis Mornay, governor of Saumur, under whose auspices an academy was founded, which flourished till 1785, greatly contributing to the importance and prosperity of the town. Louis XV. founded the celebrated École de Cavalerie, now greatly enlarged, and second only to that of St. Cyr.

Saumur is the birthplace of Madame Dacier, daughter and wife of Hellenists, as learned as herself. It possesses several free schools, philanthropic societies, a public library, a museum rich in Celtic and Gallo-Roman relics, a botanical garden—in fact, like all other French provincial towns, the resources of a capital in miniature.

CHAPTER IV.

COUNTRY LIFE IN ANJOU.

THE hot weather was now setting in, and it was with no small sense of relief that I alighted at the little station of Les Rosiers, on the line from Saumur to Angers, having before me the prospect of a quiet time with kind French friends at their country house. I found them waiting for me at the little village of Gennes, reached by omnibus from the railway, and together we climbed the green heights crowned by the fine old town of St. Eusèbe, overlooking the surrounding country and the Loire. We had before us a wide, heart-reviving panorama of the river, broad, swift-flowing, and steely bright in the clear afternoon light, with here and there a fairy-like fishing-boat skimming the surface, and on either side gentle undulations covered with corn and vine and wood. Between the river and the hill we had climbed stretched a vast sweep of richly cultivated country, parcelled out in small holdings, making it like a mosaic of green, purple and gold. The rich ripe yellow of the wheat predominates, and mingling with it are the paler-hued barley and rye; patches of dark green hemp and purple beet; the brilliant green vines, here growing like gooseberry-bushes without

support; potato-fields in blossom, luzern now in full purple flower, and various other crops, each lending variety to the bright patchwork before us. Everywhere are fruit-trees in great plenty, walnut and service-berry, pear, apple and plum, forming avenues in the public way, and mingling tufts of green with the gold. No words can give an idea of the richness and fertility of such a scene, nor of the picturesque beauty lent to it by the Loirè, to-day like the Rhine, an 'exulting and abounding river,' filling the heart with joy to behold. Gazing on such prospects as these in fair, Providence-favoured France, it is difficult to believe that five years ago war swept over the face of the country like a pestilence blast, working woe and destruction everywhere. Wherever you go now, you find evidence of prosperity and material advancement, nowhere traces of that most pitiless war, which threatened the very French State with annihilation.

The church of St. Eusèbe is curious, in its quaint Romanesque tower, and resembles that of St. George le Toureil, mentioned further on, both of them dating from the Carlovingian period. Something may be learned by the student of architecture from all these old churches, which, with their picturesque towers surmounted by turrets, all in dark grey stone, form striking features in the landscape.

This is a land rich in historical associations. There are Druidic remains—so-called—in abundance, Roman and Gallo-Roman relics here and there, and of feudal recollections not a few. Travellers rarely leave the beaten track to visit it. Perhaps no part of France that lies out of ordinary tourists' routes is less known, yet

few offer more varied objects of interest. As we drove homewards through the golden cornfields, patches of maize, vine, and potato, and thickly set walnut-trees on either side, we came upon a huge menhir, the monolith of granite rising from amid a sea of ripening wheat and barley with most striking effect. I know not which is most solemn—the menhir or dolmen, as seen here amid gardens, orchards and smiling villages, or as we find them at Carnac and Locmariaker, standing in solitary savage plains against a lonely sea.

A good road, bordered with fruit trees, and passing through clean, prosperous-looking villages, led to my friend's house, standing in such a garden-full of flowers as I shall never forget. It was not what our French friends call 'un jardin lêché,' but something much more delightful; namely, a garden without design or plan, and, except for abundant watering, left much to itself; a dozen pleasure-grounds in one, indeed, with bits of vegetable garden and orchard, running into the parterres, delightful little corners, all turf and shadow, woods in miniature, green walks shaded by cherry-trees laden with lustrous fruit, trellised vines, reminding me of Italy, a tiny rivulet overgrown with loosestrife and willowherb, glimpses of yellow cornfields through all, and flowers in indescribable, royal, distracting abundance everywhere.

Would I could describe them! but a chapter, nay, a volume, would not do it. Take for instance the pinks and carnations, or *œillet*, introduced into France by the good King René. What do we in England know of this glorious flower?—here rivalling the rose both in splendour and perfume. Then take the lark-

spur, a poor creature of a flower with us, banished long ago from rich people's gardens; but what a beautiful flower is the larkspur when seen in perfection! graceful, nay, stately, with glorious minarets of delicate blossoms in white, pink, lavender, and deep purple; in fact, a bed of larkspurs is a garden in itself if properly cultivated. Then there is a countless variety of the familiar dragon's-mouth, or antirrhinum, brilliant gold and ruby colours predominating, but others in plenty; the bright rose-pink and pure white *Belle de nuit*, known to us as Marvel of Peru, and to our American friends as Four-o'clock; and roses in great splendour and abundance.

In my friend's garden are hardly any but these old-fashioned flowers; a large variety of sweet-Williams, in French *œillet de Poète*; roses, of course; and by no means least, if last mentioned, the exquisitely graceful and poetic cornflower, or *bluet*, here cherished as a garden flower, but only known in England by one variety, that bluest of the blue, *centaurea cyanea*. Here we have cornflowers white, purple, rose-coloured, or white with just a tinge of shell-like pink, violet, or orange. It is the poet's and the children's flower in France, and you find no garden without it.

But hard as it would be to give any idea of the flowers in this highly favoured country, it would be harder still to describe the quantity and luxuriance of the fruit. Everything flourishes here; and as we stroll from one end of the garden to the other we can pluck such fruit as only millionaires can heap upon their tables in England — mulberries, ripe and luscious;

strawberries, raspberries, cherries, gooseberries; in fact, every fruit you can think of, with plums, peaches, figs, pears, and grapes ripening as fast as possible to replace all these. The small Alpine strawberries, called *fraises des quatres saisons*, are to be had till November, and are excellent. Then there is almost every vegetable that money can purchase at Covent Garden, artichokes, green peas, all kinds of salads, the *aubergine* or mad apple, unknown with us; salsify also, and *cardon*, both excellent vegetables; none of these in France, luxuries of the rich, but the daily portion of the poor also. So rich is the soil, and so splendid the climate, that working people here eat asparagus, green peas, and strawberries every day, as they eat bread and cheese with us, and doubtless find in them much more nourishment than we believe.

The garden, which is in fact a dozen gardens in one, runs all round the house, and on one side is a large clear pond, overshadowed by lofty poplars and acacias; such a pond as Constable would have loved to paint, with delicious play of light and shadow and meditative cows, always knee-deep in the grass, and glimpses of golden corn-fields beyond.

Around on every side we have the same landscape —wide sweeps of ripening harvest-fields and clusters of fruit-trees in their midst, patches of bright green hemp or vine, tall Lombardy poplars and larches making shadows here and there, and above all, wooded hills crowned by church spire or château; everywhere perfume of wild rose and honeysuckle, everywhere the singing of birds. At the extreme end of the house lives the farm-steward, with his wife and three

children, happy little things who had the run of the garden, and used to come up to kiss us night and morning as naturally as if they were children of the house. 'The children of the poor like to shout and play as well as the children of the rich,' said my hostess to me, and so they played hide and seek amid the shrubberies, and ran races in the garden walks, without any fear of intrusion.

My friends, Monsieur and Madame G., are Republicans of the most liberal type, and practise in their lives a purer, loftier kind of Socialism than was ever invented by St. Simon or Fourier. When they first settled in their country home—spending of course the winter in town—they made up their minds to do all the good in their power; not by preaching, tract-giving, or charity, but by living among the peasantry and associating with them in so far as possible, thus, by sympathy and example, leading them to a higher standard of life and feeling. The husband devoted himself to the progress of agriculture and the general well-being of his poorer neighbours; the wife, to their intellectual and social advancement by means of lending libraries, &c., and frequent intercourse. Thus, I could not perhaps have found in all France two people better fitted to introduce me to the very class I most wanted to study; and, as will be seen from the following record of daily experiences under their roof, I made the acquaintance of the French peasant under peculiarly favourable circumstances. Neighbours in the usual acceptation of the word—that is to say, ladies and gentlemen living in châteaux, or country houses—were few and far between; and ladies

and gentlemen are the same all the world over! But education, custom, and intercourse have not in anything like the same degree assimilated the working classes of different countries, and the French peasant proprietor differs essentially from the English agricultural labourer. We devoted ourselves therefore entirely to those neighbours who lived close at hand, who never go to the sea-side or otherwise absent themselves, and when they go out to dinner wear white mob caps and blue blouses.

On the morning after my arrival my host and hostess gave a breakfast party, which, as being wholly unique in my experience, I will describe as accurately as I can. The guests were five in number, namely, two small farmers, a carpenter and his wife, and a bright lad, son of one of the former. All were exceedingly neat and well dressed; the *cultivateurs* in blue blouses; the carpenter in a black coat; his wife wearing the pretty white coiffe and Quakerish costume of the country, viz. black dress, leg-of-mutton sleeves, worked chemisette, and little muslin shawl. Now nothing could exceed the good breeding of these guests, whose hands and faces were as brown as outdoor toil could make them, and who most likely had never travelled twenty miles from their native village. They talked of what was going on in French politics with great animation and intelligence, discussed M. Waddington's educational schemes, the state of affairs generally, and in fact were what is usually called good company. There was not a vestige of awkwardness, much less swagger or vulgarity, about them. They ate and drank of the plenteous cheer

moderately, yet with evident gastronomic discrimination. They behaved, indeed, as if they had been accustomed to associate with educated ladies and gentlemen from their earliest years. One point, however, did strike me; and when our guests had dispersed I ventured to ask my hostess why the men had remained covered during the meal; for, excepting to remove their hats when first greeting us, they kept them on their heads all the time—a proceeding, as it seemed to me, quite and curiously at variance with their behaviour as a whole. The explanation was quite satisfactory. It seems that in this part of France, as well as throughout Brittany, the country-folks always keep their hats on at meal-times, simply because they have nowhere else to put them! Their houses are very small, and the ordinary hat-rack or peg is an innovation that has not yet been introduced there; thus they are greatly at a loss to know what to do with their head-coverings, unless on their heads or in those large, commodious clothes' presses, in which they deposit the working-day hat when taking out the Sunday one for grand occasions. My mind therefore was set at ease, and I got ever afterwards reconciled to the spectacle of men eating in ladies' company with their heads covered.

The next day we drove to see the mother of Desiré, my friends' man-servant, who, with his fellows, had been for years in their service. Desiré is a pleasant, amiable young fellow, very entertaining when he gets on to the subject of the Franco-German war, in which he served, and very handy, able to drive, wait at table, do a little farming if need be—in fact, turn

his hand to everything. Everyone possesses here what is called *un avoir*, or *un bien*, that is to say, a bit of land, two or three houses, or some kind of property; and Desiré's mother, just left a widow, has a little farm, which, according to French law—always so hard on women—ought to be divided among her sons and daughters, herself retaining a small portion only; but which, as she has dutiful children, is to remain hers for life. Desiré besides possesses a vineyard, the fruit of his savings, and will doubtless be rich before he dies. Madame G. kissed the old woman on both cheeks as if she had been her sister, and we stopped with her for some time, chatting with her about her crops, &c. 'Portez-vous bien' is the usual farewell word, or 'Bonne santé;' whilst not to interchange a friendly greeting with everyone you meet would be looked upon as proud or sulky.

There are two things that strike a foreigner, as he drives or walks along the country roads and lanes. In the first place, it is odd to English eyes to see trees left in the midst of corn-fields. A Suffolk or Norfolk farmer looks twice before he will hire a farm with trees standing in the fields, for the corn is precious always, but the trees bring him in nothing at all. Here, the case is quite otherwise. A tree, says a homely French proverb, earns its living, and so the walnut, the apple, or service-berry is allowed to overshadow the wheat and the barley undisturbed. The walnut gives a most valuable crop, besides supplying the grower with oil, whilst the apple is sold for cyder; and of the fruit of the service-berry is made an excellent drink something like cyder, for his own use.

It is called here the *sorbier*, or *cormier*, and its wood makes excellent walking-sticks. The rich foliage of these trees, drooping low over the waving corn, has a beautiful effect, and I have seen some wheat-fields planted with them as thickly as an orchard.

The second point is the strange solitude of the country walks and drives before alluded to. You may go east, west, north, south, at any hour of the day, in any season of the year, but you never by any chance whatever encounter any one but the peasants at their work, the mitler journeying from one village to another, or perhaps the curé wending his way to church. I have elsewhere alluded to this in speaking of Brittany and La Vendée, but one would certainly expect more life and movement in Anjou, a country far more advanced than the two first, and made so accessible in every part by railways. Country houses may be seen peeping through the trees here and there, but at rare intervals, and it must be borne in mind that Frenchwomen never walk out. They pay visits, and they go to mass, on foot, if they do not keep a carriage, but walking out for health or recreation would no more enter into their heads than it would enter into the heads of Englishwomen to shut themselves up in doors from one week's end to another. Exercise, as we understand it, is masculine, unwomanly, and eccentric to a feminine French mind ; and it is therefore not to be wondered at that English girls are so much more robust, active-minded, and enterprising than young ladies on the other side of La Manche.

My friends in their country house are curiously

independent of towns as far as the material exigencies of life are concerned. Rich and poor alike have such stores of eatables and drinkables, medicines and clothing, at home, that there is hardly more shopping done than if we were living on an ocean island. My hostess, for instance, besides the stores of home-grown wine in her cellars, has innumerable and delicious home-grown liqueurs, orange, cassis (made of black currants), noyeau, brandy, also spirits of wine for her lamps. Then, it is needless to say, there were supplies of jellies and jams enough to set up a grocer's shop. There is further, walnut-oil, raisin-vinegar, honey, home-spun linen, home-made stimulants, purgatives, and ointments; home-made everything, in fact, except shoes and stationery, for the rich must go to the neighbouring town to buy shoes and writing paper, and the poor to the sabotiers for their sabots. Of course there are cows, affording cream and butter in abundance, a well-stocked poultry yard; and, in addition to all these, fish in the neighbouring streams. It is, indeed, a land of Goshen, overflowing with milk and honey, and it especially strikes an English mind, unaccustomed as we are to the sight of anything home-made, except perhaps black-currant jam for clerical sore throats.

Of course all these stores imply good housekeeping, and there can be no doubt that Frenchwomen greatly excel us in this particular. It is wonderful how much of her time a French housewife devotes to her domestic duties; generally speaking, indeed, she gives herself wholly up to them as is the fashion in Germany; and, although the mistress of several servants, not only

superintends, but takes part in the various processes of preserving, liqueur-making, and cooking in general. Much less time, and certainly, in proportion to general expenditure, much less money is spent with us on eating and drinking, and of course the result is a far more varied, complicated, and superior cookery in France. The working classes here, including, of course, the small peasant farmer, spend money neither on eating and drinking, nor clothes. They literally buy nothing except a little coffee, a cloth coat, and sabots—the sabots being economised as much as possible by the habit of going barefooted. The farm-steward, his wife and children, the day labourers, men and women—the servants, even, on very hot days—do their work without shoes and stockings. Added to this rigid system of economy is a laboriousness of which we in England have no idea. Domestic servants are always up by five or half-past five o'clock in summer, not much later in winter; and working people, whether working on their own account or for wages, are generally up at four during the busy season. In very hot weather they judiciously prefer to work late at night than during the meridian heat of the day, resting from twelve to two or three o'clock, and working till ten at night. Wages are, of course, low in a land where so little money circulates. Two francs a day without food, or one franc a day with food, are the average wages of farm-labourers here; needlewomen get sixpence a day and board; washerwomen, or *lessiveuses*, a franc. Work paid for by the piece brings in more. Thus, during the wheat-cutting and the vintage, an able man or woman labourer can earn as much as four or five francs a day. Their food,

when they are supplied with it by their employers, is simple—a *soupe maigre* (and it is quite a mistake to suppose that there is no nourishment in these soups), salad, and cooked vegetables in plenty, bread, and, though not always, bacon; seldom or never a bit of beef or mutton. Wine, of course, is always found. On this homely fare French peasants thrive amazingly, and achieve such a day's work as would astonish their English fellows. They are not a fine race, but wiry, healthy-looking, and capable of resisting fatigue to a degree quite unusual among artizans in large towns. Their physiques have not been enervated by stimulants or bad habits generally, and as a rule the worst defect that can be imputed to them is avarice. They are all honest; every man here being a landed proprietor on a small scale, every one's property is respected. Thus no bars or bolts are needed at night, no gates or walls round gardens and vineyards. Pilfering, much less stealing from one another, is absolutely unknown. Fruits, vegetables, and produce generally are gathered in unmolested by even juvenile marauders.

This propertied condition—all the country people of whom I speak, with very trifling exceptions, being owners of land, houses, or vineyards—tells upon the moral character in divers ways. You find no sense of rank or inequality. When in our drives we stopped to enquire after the Mère this or the Père that, the children would run up to kiss us as a matter of course, and both men and women, after bidding us be seated and inviting us 'to refresh ourselves' with the best they had, would sit down and enter

into conversation as easily as if we had been their next door neighbours. The sense of independence resulting from this general distribution of property gives them this frank, manly, pleasant bearing. They are satisfied with their position; they do not behold a carriage or fine clothes grudgingly; and they are as free on the one hand from subservience as on the other from undue familiarity. The French word *désinvolture* very aptly expresses the good manners of these country people—good manners, be it remembered, not learned from travel, education, or mixing with the world, but merely the result of an honest, manly, natural life. A man toils for his children and children's children, and thus is enlarged and uplifted by honest ambition and exemplary self-sacrifice.

This is a land of *petite culture*, that is to say, of the smallest holdings found anywhere in France. They vary from two to fifty acres, the great majority consisting of four or five. Naturally, such small farms cannot support a horse, so one horse is kept by two or three owners on co-operative principles. The smallest farm is parcelled out to an equal extent with the largest; and on a bit of land that in the eyes of a Suffolk farmer would be considered a very small field indeed, are seen patches of wheat, barley, oats, and rye, a vineyard, a potato-field—potatoes being largely cultivated for sale here—a bit of clover, turnips, luzern, and hemp, besides a garden as full as it can be of fruit and vegetables. Orchard there is none, the whole farm being, so to say, an orchard —walnut, apple, pear, plum, and service-berry trees

growing amid the crops or by the way side. A good fruit crop will make up for a bad harvest, a good vintage for a bad cyder year, and so on, the peasant farmers having always something to fall back upon. A cow or two, a dozen sheep, pigs, poultry, and geese are always kept; the geese alone realising a good deal by the end of the year. Whilst the women and young girls keep the geese, they knit stockings, spin, and mend the clothes on their backs, and we never walked out in the evening without encountering some wild little girl, like George Sand's *Petite Fadette*, bringing home her flock. The geese sell for five shillings a piece, but I am sorry to say that they are made to realize twenty times this sum before selling by the cruel habit of stripping them of their feathers for eider-down. The poor creatures undergo this savage operation several times a year, all the softer feathers lining the wings and covering the breast being stripped. In this state we met more than one flock, and a horrid spectacle it is; but it is useless to reason with their owners. To strip the geese as soon as they are ready seems as natural to them as to rob the apple-trees of their crop when the proper time comes, and I fear it will be long before they think differently. Cruelty and hardness to animals, generally arising from avarice, is indeed the one blot on these idyllic scenes of French country life. We cannot forget it in the midst of pictures reminding us of Corot, Daubigny, Lamartine, and George Sand. The priests, without doubt, might do something if they took up the matter, but we know that cruelty to animals is not a sin in their eyes. The priests

do not concern themselves with what lies out of their immediate sphere, if, indeed, humanity to the defenceless can be said to lie out of any one's sphere. They do not combat ignorance either; and so long as their parishioners go to mass and confessional, they may ill-use their animals and neglect personal cleanliness and hygiene as much as they please. Certainly nothing like the dirt and squalor of Brittany is seen here, but soap and water are used shyly; except for the face and hands, not often; and I do not suppose a bath of even modest dimensions was ever heard of, much less seen, by the agricultural population of these parts. These are the blots on a picture of universal well-being and contentment—hardness to animals, want of personal and general cleanliness, parsimony amounting to avarice, and, we must also add, superstition and ignorance.

My friend Madame G—— founded a lending library some years ago, and her scheme has been successful; but this was the first of the kind ever set on foot here, and was, of course, opposed at the outset by the priests. Nevertheless, she persevered, and by her means several hundred useful works have been in steady circulation ever since. But it is difficult for us in England to realise the ungratefulness of such tasks in France. With ourselves a philanthropic worker for the public good is, as a rule, furthered, not hindered; here he is at once regarded as an enemy of morality, of society, of religion—an Anti-Christ embodied. Thus it comes about that when an enlightened lady or gentleman settles down in the

country, unless they consent to work with the curé, they have an uphill path before them indeed. No wonder that lending libraries are so rare, and ignorance so dense in rural places. Yet intelligence is not wanting. I feel sure you have only to educate the French peasant to make him all that he ought to be. Fortunately he has some faith left, and let him not, like his fellows in large cities, be robbed of that, ere something better be found to fill its place!

CHAPTER V.

COUNTRY LIFE IN ANJOU—*continued.*

ONE day, after an early five o'clock dinner, we paid a series of interesting visits—first of all calling on a poet sabotier, who lived in a pretty English-like cottage, with flowers in the window, brightly-polished oak presses, neatly swept floors, and a general look of well-being. Our object was to invite him and his wife, a really charming person, to dine with us on the following Sunday, and very naturally and gracefully they accepted the invitation. I talked a good deal with the poet—who had a handsome face, and rather a wistful look I thought—and found him very pleasant and communicative. He had read Shakespeare in a translation, and talked enthusiastically of Macbeth, Hamlet, and Othello, also of Victor Hugo and Paris, speaking of the latter almost as wistfully as Nadaud's Gascon peasant, whose last lament was 'Je ne verrai pas Carcassónne.' The poor sabotier! how could he ever hope to see Paris, with his young sons to bring up and provide for, and sabots fetching only from two to three francs a pair! He was certainly compensated for some of these disappointments by his wife, who, whilst working as hard as himself and unable to read, evidently regarded him as a second Béranger. She

was a plain-featured, yet sweet-faced woman, exquisitely neat and nice, and perfectly at home. After a little chat, the younger boy, a bright-looking lad, who, with his father, had quitted the workshop to receive us, put on a clean blouse and set off with us on another visit. This was to the Père Masson, a hale, shrewd-looking old fellow, who had been our guest at the breakfast-party I have already spoken of, and whom we now found reading to his wife, while she busied herself with the quarterly or half-yearly wash, I forget which. I know that it had lasted several days, and that several *lessiveuses* or washerwomen had been called in to help. The business was nearly over, but a few clothes remained to be wrung out; and whilst the Mère Masson was thus engaged, her husband amused her by reading from an illustrated periodical. It will be seen from this that reading is sometimes resorted to as an amusement, even at the busiest time of the year. The Père Masson is a good specimen of the peasant farmer. Rich, hard-working, and above the average in intelligence, he belongs to that class which may be called the sinews of France. Such men would be a credit to any country. With few opportunities of improvement, with very little capital except muscles to begin with, he has attained an easy and honourable position, and will leave a good name, and a nice little estate, behind him. Yet, in spite of his wealth and his seventy years, he works as hard as his strength permits; and were he to become twice as rich, would never dream of changing the familiar blue blouse and sabots for broad cloth and boots. He was much interested to hear all that I could tell him about agri-

culture in England, and the various improvements by means of machinery and otherwise, which, of course, are not practicable here. Steam threshing-machines, and other recent agricultural implements, cannot be worked in a country where the holdings are so small, and as is only natural, the land under the circumstances cannot be farmed to such advantage. A farmer who has only half-a-dozen acres is obliged to plant, not in accordance with the requirements of the soil, but with his own. He wants, for instance, a few turnips or carrots for his cows and sheep, a vineyard for his private use, and so on, whereas the land should be enriched by a plentiful supply of artificial manure, and a quite different rotation of crops. Artificial manure, to any extent, the peasant proprietors cannot afford to buy, whilst the old system of threshing the corn, namely, by horse and roller, is more economical and convenient for such small crops than the new. Thus it will easily be conceived that whilst the material position of the farmer increases every year, agricultural progress, in our sense of the word, does not advance in anything like the same degree. Laboriousness and economy, rather than science and skill, make the French farmer a capitalist, and his gains are increased by saving and ingenuity in making the best of everything, not by keeping up with the times.

We next called upon the schoolmaster and the nuns, who are the schoolmistresses, and also the country doctors. Both boys' and girls' schools are Écoles communales, *i.e.* lay schools, supported by the State; but unfortunately the commune was

induced some years ago to accept a house and piece of land from some benevolently-disposed person, on condition that the schools should be kept by the sisters. The consequence is that the boys and girls get quite a different education; and it will be interesting to note, further on, of what opposite character were the prize-books distributed to the scholars of the two schools before the annual breaking up. The schoolmaster—a handsome young man with a nice wife, daughter of a rich peasant of the place—received us most cordially, and from him we learned a good deal about the schools. There are on an average twenty and odd boys, whilst there are as many as sixty girls in attendance at the girls' school. Elementary education is not as yet obligatory in France, and the natural consequence is that the elder boys are kept at work in the fields. The schoolmaster's pay is £30 a year and a house, with a trifling capitation fee; this will soon be increased by virtue of M. Waddington's recent educational grant—a most necessary and salutary reformation. The position of the French schoolmaster has hitherto been miserable, and but for a rich marriage he could not possibly maintain his wife and children. Added to these drawbacks are others not to be indicated by facts and figures. There is no one more liable to censure, or political and social persecution; and if he is not by nature born a trimmer, and pleases everybody, he most likely pleases nobody, and has a hard time of it.[1] We next paid a

[1] There are two little books, which give a better idea of the schoolmaster's difficulties in France than any amount of bare information. The first of these is from the pen of M. Jules Simon, and forms one of

visit to the sisters, one of whom, a harsh-featured, loud-voiced woman, evidently of the peasant class, began at once speaking of her medical rounds. It seemed that on her principally devolved the duty of physicking the poor people, and it made one's flesh creep to hear her talk of her remedies. 'Mon Dieu, comme je suis affairée!' she said; 'Tout le monde a besoin d'être purgé dans ce moment;' and she evidently purged with a vengeance. There were medicines in the little parlour enough to stock an apothecary's shop, and we were told that there was a good deal of sickness about. Except in case of accident, no one ever thinks of fetching the nearest medical man, who is ten miles off or more; and we were told of a poor man having to wait for three days to get a broken arm set. I believe that French legislators are now turning their attention to the medical service in country places, and not before it is time. Doctors are so few and far between, that even if you are rich enough to send for them, they are seldom able to come within several hours, and often twenty-four will elapse before even the nearest can be secured. The nuns, as has before been said, starve out the country doctors; and till this female qaackery is prohibited by law, and qualified medical men are tempted to settle down in rural districts by a prospect of gaining their bread, it is not likely that such a state of things will improve. Women doctors, my friend says, would succeed, but

that excellent and much persecuted little series, *La Bibliothèque Démocratique*, under the title of 'L'Instruction Obligatoire.' The other, under the form of a romance, is by the well-known writer, André Léo, and is called *Jacques Galeron*.

they should wear a nunlike or Quakerish garb. Next door to the convent was living an old maiden lady, rich, but belonging to the peasant class, and it was she who had bestowed the land and building for the girls' school on the terms before mentioned. She was called Mademoiselle, and kept an old female servant; but the two lived together in a cottage like sisters, and it was impossible to tell, from their appearance, which was mistress and which was maid. The latter sat down and talked with us as easily as the former, and invited us to take refreshments, as if indeed she were doing the honours of her own house—another instance of the perfect social equality found here. We called also upon M. le Curé, and in his absence were received by his mother, a respectable peasant woman, in cotton gown, white coiffe, and sabots. The rural clergy of France belong entirely to the working classes, and their education is paid for by the commune. When a penniless youth studies at the seminary, the expenses are put down to his account, and on being made curé the sum is deducted from his pay by instalments. An educated married clergy, there can be little doubt, would do more than anything else to raise the moral and spiritual condition of the peasantry, and to take away that selfishness which is their worst defect. I remember talking to some French friends about the deep sympathy felt by certain sections of our working classes for the sick and wounded French soldiers during the last Franco-German war, and relating how common it was for domestic servants and working people to add their subscriptions to those made by the head of the

family or at church. My friends could hardly believe that such classes would give their wages to such a cause! 'Alas!' said they, 'were twice such calamities to befall your England, the hand of the French peasant would be closed.' He is essentially avaricious, in fact, and only gives to the priest for his soul's good.

The places we visited in our evening drives—the tremendous heat of the day (July, 1876) keeping us indoors from eight in the morning till seven at night—were no less interesting than the people. This is a land of dolmens and old churches, and we were always coming on exquisite bits of scenery recalling Daubigny, Corot, and Troyon. St. George les Sept Voies possesses a curious old church, with a Romanesque tower, and a most beautiful altar-piece or tabernacle, not mentioned that I can discover in any guide-book, but quite a master-piece. It is carved in wood, and so thickly covered with gold as to look as if made of gold itself. In the centre compartment is the figure of Christ, the body coloured to represent life, and on each side are two figures of angels, also of wood, and coloured. There is much expression and pathos in these faces, and also grace and skilfulness in the modelling. Underneath are represented all the objects connected with the Passion, namely, the crown of thorns, the sponge, the sword, the nails, the scourge, the manacles, &c. On a level with the figure of the Saviour and the angels are the holy women and the apostles. This curious work of art—the effect of which is splendid in the extreme, the gold being as fresh as if laid on yesterday—is supposed to have been brought from the Abbey of St.

Maur or St. Florent le Veil, but nothing of certainty is known about it. Close to the church is the ancient Priory, now inhabited by the curé, in which lived formerly eight monks. The panelled kitchen, handsome Romanesque chimney-piece and ceiling, give evidence of former splendour.

As we drove homeward from St. George's the antiquity and former ecclesiastical riches of the place became more apparent. Here and there are fragments of ruined arch and portico, evidently portions of chapels, and as yet uninjured by time—quaint old farm-houses—with slate-roofed towers and turrets, and picturesque dormers, which were before the Revolution most likely monastic institutions. In fact, most of the land hereabouts belonged to the Church up till the time when by virtue of assignats it fell into the hands of the peasants. Occasionally we came upon some majestic menhir, standing in the midst of corn-fields or vineyards, the abundance of so-called Druidic monuments forming one of the most curious features of this curious country. One of these, the Pierre couverte de la Bajoulière, is remarkable, and is said to have served as a chapel in 1144, mass being performed there for some nuns who had been driven from their convent by the monks of St. Florent. This dolmen stands in a bit of country as rocky and wild as that I shall describe further on at Plougastel, in Brittany. The huge blocks of granite lying about reminded me also of Tunbridge Wells, though here the scenery is on a grander scale. The upper part of the dolmen consists of three huge slabs resting upon smaller ones, the whole

measuring, I should say, twenty feet. The interior, which has been often searched for treasure, is now choked up with rubbish, and the stones so embedded in the soil as to lose much of their height. But the effect is still striking, and the entourage wild and picturesque; the plain around being covered with huge masses of fantastically shaped granite; beyond views of fair open country, and on one side a row of quaint windmills standing against the clear sky. Windmills are always planted in companies here, and are very characteristic objects of the landscape.

I remember no lovelier pictures of a pastoral kind than those we encountered in our evening drives—rivulets, overshadowed by Corot's trees—silvery poplars and willows—under which the cows were resting, or the women washing, a shaggy sheep-dog invariably looking on; or we drove along the banks of the cool grey waters of the Loire, with little fishing-boats at anchor far away, and close, as it seemed, to the purple and orange sky; patches of golden corn, and ridges of fir and pine on the hills; and close by in the road, little rustic scenes—here a girl bringing home her sheep, knitting as she goes; there a couple of children coming home from school, whom father has mounted on his plough-horse. Every incident of daily life is poetised by the exquisite atmosphere and the peace and prosperity reigning everywhere. How, indeed, can existence be hard or ugly on a soil so favoured, in a climate so happy?

These warm July evenings reminded me of Egypt and Algeria. There was the same transparency of light, the same brilliance, if I may so express it, of

shadow, the same indescribable lustre, softness, harmony. In my friend's garden the extraordinary luminosity of the atmosphere was above all remarkable. The effect of the glistening white walls against the purple sky could be compared to nothing but the East, while so intense was the clearness that the upper leaves of a grove of lime-trees glowed with light as if the moon or sun were shining! Yet there was no moon—only a few stars were out, and it was the purity of the air alone that lent such silveriness and luminosity. Again, nothing in England can be compared to the brilliance of the ripe corn here as seen about sunset. The cornfields outside our garden are veritable floods of amber; we seem at this time of day, in fact, to be living in a golden vapour, in a world where every object is of gold; later on the effect is of pearliness and silveriness, but none the less beautiful. The heat during the day had been tremendous—quite tropical.

I must not forget one curious feature of this landscape, namely, the rock-dwellings. These subterranean habitations remind me of Virgil's description—

> Ipsi in defossis specubus secura sub alta
> Otia agunt terra, congestaque robora, totasque
> Advolvere focis ulmos, ignique dedere.

The formation is *tuffeau*, or yellow chalk rock, a soft calcareous stone, that easily lends itself to the cutting, and which is commonly used here for building purposes. The rocks are hollowed out into ready-made habitations, and in walking or driving through this curious country you are constantly coming upon a little Troglodyte village. Sometimes you have the backs of the

houses towards you, and see nothing of them but tall chimneys rising out of the fields along the roadside; at others you pass the inner side of a cave containing half-a-dozen dwellings, with crops and fruit-trees flourishing overhead. Many have no windows, and are only ventilated by the chimney and the door, but others have smaller ones, and are not uncomfortable looking. Vines and roses are trained on the walls, giving a warm southern look to the scene. We visited several of these caves, and in one found a spinning loom which had been worked there for years. I must say the idea of living and working in the bowels of the earth seemed to me horrible, though the darkest and most comfortless of the caves have long ago been abandoned to the animals and farm implements. Not that the animals like it. We saw a cow, whose night lodging was in a dark damp cellar, without light or air, and though the poor animal lowed piteously and we remonstrated on the unwholesomeness of the thing, its owner was not to be moved. Nothing would have been easier than to cut a square hole in the door, but the cow had already lived so long without it, why change matters? There is no more headstrong creature in the world than your French peasant. You can only touch him by appealing to his worldly interests, and, alas! one looks in vain for any spiritualising influences that may in the future make him the creature he ought to be. At present he is an admirable wealth-creating human machine; a harmless, nay, respectable member of the human bee-hive; but no nobility, no sympathy, no soul-lifting impulses have been put into him.

The Troglodyte villages are as unlike anything English as can be conceived; but when we get to the villages themselves, such as St. George les Sept Voies, la Menitré, &c., the neat little cottages, with flower-garden, and newly-constructed villas of middle-class owners, have an English aspect; there is order and tidiness, and a look of prosperity everywhere. The most striking point of difference is offered by the bare-footed gipsy-like peasantry, and the patchwork of a hundred crops, where in England we should find but one or two. The landscape is a perfect chess-board of green and yellow, of every shade and intensity. In some places the scenery is of a different character, for instance, by way of le Toureil to the banks of the Loire. Here we passed between oak woods and fir-ridges, recalling parts of Surrey and Sussex, coming suddenly by a winding descent to a quaint Renaissance church on the borders of the Loire. It was after sunset, and only a rose pink and golden glow indicated the west. The beauty of the river on such a night is indescribable—the delicacy and brilliancy of the rainbow-tinted sky, the pearly surface of the Loire, the deep shadows reflected on its surface of undulated banks and wooded islets, the distant fishing-boats—here was a scene for a painter, full of inexpressible poetry, grace, and harmony, a thousand sudden gradations of colour making up the whole. Harvest began about the middle of July, and of course all the corn is cut by the sickle. The land here is apportioned out into what is called boisselées, 15 boisselées going to a hectare, which is 2½ acres. The reaping is done by the piece, and is

generally let out at 3 francs a boisselé, a skilful workman or workwoman being enabled to cut one and a half per diem. The workpeople employed on my friend's property are all fed on the place, the commissariat and cooking being entrusted to the wife of the fermier or farm-bailiff. As the weather is intensely hot, they take their meals out of doors; and a merry party they are, consisting of the cook, housemaid, and man-servant, the farmer, his wife and children, the dairy-woman, the stockman, two labourers, a needlewoman, and two lads, making in all fifteen persons, who dine and sup under the walnut-trees. These people are always cheerful, nay, quietly gay, and no wonder. They enjoy a gradually increasing well-being, they are providing for their children, and they are not agitated by political and social problems and panics as the workmen of the towns. They have extraordinarily few wants, moreover, and are utterly free from that spirit of envy which is so grave a defect in the French artisan.

One day we went to the annual prize distribution of the village schools, the two Écoles communales I have before mentioned. The ceremony began by musical performances of the village band, the whole under the direction of the curé. The municipal council and the mayor—three persons in all, who, judging from their appearance, were small farmers—were there, also the nuns, and a lady landowner living in the place. The rule is to give every child a prize on these occasions, the deserving scholars being distinguished by the best. The prizes of honour were very handsome; among them I noticed several translations of admirable

English books for boys. Each boy, as he came up for his prize, was crowned with a green paper wreath, and all of us were called upon by turns to perform the ceremony. The boys, it must be mentioned, got much the best of it, their books being instructive and amusing books of travel, history, and biography, while the little girls, being under the supervision of the nuns, got, instead, dry little theological treatises —works on the sacraments, the catechism, &c., the only attractive part about them being a gaudy cover. One boy had just passed his examination for the École Normale at Angers, and was about to be trained as a schoolmaster; thus a peasant lad in France, if persevering and intelligent, has equal chances of success with the son of the rich bourgeois. This bare-footed lad, whose parents are poor hard-working day-labourers, will some day be *Instituteur*, and perhaps *Professeur*. All is open before him, and there is no prejudice against his plebeian origin. The odd part of it is, that when a French peasant improves his position, he does not alter his mode of life. He is still content to go barefoot or wear sabots, and to see his wife in coiffe. He does not long to varnish himself with a gloss of apparent gentility, as is the case with our own working-people, and also with his fellows of the towns. Sobriety is the predominant characteristic of the French peasant proprietor, and let us not be tempted to undervalue it by the conspicuous absence of other qualities.

One day we visited an auctioneer, and found the same contradictions I have before mentioned: on the one hand, great worldly ease and a certain amount of

education, nay, culture; and on the other, the utmost homeliness, I am almost tempted to say, sordidness of life. He was rich in his way, and was doing a good business; he was fond of music, and spent his leisure moments in studying the violin; he loved reading, and had on his shelves Renan's 'Vie de Jésus,' Erckmann-Chatrian's novels, and other works of a high class, yet he was living the life of a peasant, evidently without higher ambitions. We had gone to purchase some ducks, and meantime a collation was spread—wine and preserves, bread and butter—for hospitality reigns everywhere, and you no sooner cross the threshold, whether of rich or poor, than you are invited to take some refreshment. After partaking of these good things, we went in search of the ducks, which, however, were too clever to be caught. An old woman servant, who lived with her employers on terms of perfect equality, put off in a boat on the large duck-pond, and with her blue gown, white cap, and a shaggy dog perched on the edge, made a picturesque figure. All round the clear brown water were blue green sallows, and sedgy banks, gay with tall pink loosestrife and willow-herb; the sky was of deep blue, and between the blue and the brown glided the boat with its pathetic figure and attendant dog. The ducks, wary as rabbits, so successfully hid themselves amid the sedge, that there seemed no prospect of catching them, and we drove off without having accomplished our errand.

This is a land of wild-flowers, birds, butterflies, and insects. All day long the garden resounds with the notes of warbler and goldfinch, thrush, chaffinch,

and many more. No one is allowed to touch them, and there is fruit enough and to spare for all.

At night the humming of insects surpasses anything I remember of the kind. They are all invisible, yet the place is alive with them. This, combined with the indescribable brilliance and luminosity of these summer nights, reminded me of Algeria and Cairo, and other fairy-like and romantic travelling experiences.

But I must close these cherished and unforgetable reminiscences of French country life and graceful, affectionate hospitality, which perhaps have already been too long. I have more especially dwelt upon that phase of it I was enabled to study to advantage, namely, the life of the peasantry, as such opportunities do not often occur to foreigners, and I feel so strongly the importance of this element in the political and social future of France. The French peasant may safely be said to form the backbone of the State. It is his industry, his sobriety, his incalculable economy, that have helped more than anything else to raise her from the abject position in which she had fallen after the last war; and it is upon this conservatism, this inrooted love of soil and national institutions which enable him to extract its riches for the benefit of the community, that wise and patriotic rulers of the future must count for support. The peasant now possesses the soil, and his tenacious clinging to it is the best safeguard France can boast of against those worst of all enemies — enemies who are her own children, called by her own name.

CHAPTER VI.

PEASANT FARMS IN BRITTANY.

HENNEBONT is a pretty little town of Morbihan, beautifully situated on the winding river Blavet, amid undulating woods and scattered farmsteads dotting hillside and valley. It is famous in history for its heroic defence by the Maria Theresa of Breton chivalry, Jeanne de Montfort, who, after valiantly holding out to the last extremity, was saved from her enemies by the brave English knight, Sir Walter de Manny. It is not insisted upon as a halting-place by guide-books; and indeed, excepting for its antiquity and pleasant surroundings, has few claims on the traveller. But it affords admirable opportunities of studying peasant farmers and peasant farming in Morbihan, and for this purpose I visited it.

My cicerone was a friend's old confidential servant since married and settled in her native town of Hennebont. She was a homely-looking person, in white cap and sabots, but full of intelligence and information, and a descendant of one of the noblest old families in Brittany. The Revolution ruined the family fortunes, and Mademoiselle de K——, betaking herself to domestic service, was fortunate in finding good friends, with whom she stayed a long time

and saved money. She and her husband had now purchased some house property with their savings. Their house was of the severest simplicity, and yet was greatly superior in regard to cleanliness and comfort to those of their poorer neighbours. Morbihan is not a land of cleanliness, and a Morbihan interior bears more resemblance to those of Ireland than Holland. The streets are so ill paved that on a wet day the water flows through the town like a river, overflowing the lower part of the houses, which is often an open court, dark and dirty, with stone stairs, dark and dirty too, leading to the upper rooms.

Entering one of these courts, and ascending a staircase such as I have described, I found the good Marie Louise, who welcomed me heartily, and led me into the best room—parlour and bedroom in one—clean, cheery and well furnished, though small. She then showed me the kitchen, but here the great difference between an English and a Breton cottage home became apparent.

We all know how a tidy English housewife, no matter how poor, loves her kitchen, with its highly-polished grate, its rows of bright saucepans and kettles, its exquisitely clean floor. The kitchen I speak of possessed a cooking range, a press, a few cooking utensils, but nothing else that I can remember, except a heap of wood. Floors here are taken no more account of than the ground; in fact, in many cases there is no flooring, so that it is impossible to make the place either warm or comfortable. Having made this survey, and been supplied with a pair of sabots, without which a farming expedition at this time of the year

(I am writing now of October, 1875) was impossible, my hostess said, we set out in search of a conveyance. This, however, in Hennebont, was no easy thing to find. All the carriages, so called, were occupied for that day, and nothing in the shape of a horse was to be had for love or money. On account of the recent rains the roads were so muddy that walking was not to be thought of. What was to be done? At last I caught sight of an open cart, and suggested to my companion we should take that rather than waste any more time in what seemed a fruitless search. 'Good, Madame,' answered Marie Louise; 'and the butcher opposite my house will perhaps lend us his horse.' So I once more ascended the staircase and watched operations from the open window. After a good deal of talk, the butcher consented to send his son for the horse, which was done, and in about an hour's time it was produced. Then seats had to be adjusted to the cart with primitive simplicity, a board being fastened to each side by a rope; lastly, a final talk took place about the price, and we were off. No sooner was the good little Breton horse put into a trot on the rough hilly roads than we became aware of the rashness of our undertaking. The improvised seat swayed backwards and forwards like a cabin bench in a rough sea, and it was only by dint of holding on tight that we could keep our balance. Whenever we came to a bit of rougher road than usual—which was often—we had to sit bolt upright, clutching the sides of the cart with all our might, the driver, with Breton imperturbability, only looking round with a calm smile. As to the harness, the wonder is it did

not collapse a dozen times, for it was merely a few yards of rope attached to a straw collar. But no mischief happened; and after jogging along for three-quarters of an hour we came to a farm, lying snugly at the end of a long green lane.

The farmer's wife received us kindly, and led us indoors, where all looked miserably comfortless and poverty-stricken. Three or four comely but unkempt, unwashed children, were playing about, whilst in one corner of the large room—kitchen, parlour, and sleeping room all in one, in fact, the family habitation—lay her husband, ill of ague. The bedsteads were of handsome carved wood, as is generally the case here; but little seemed done for comfort, much less for grace; and just outside the door lay the usual Breton dung-heap and pool of liquid manure. Yet these people rented a hundred acres of good land, paying from 1*l.* to 30*s.* per acre, and possessed thirteen or fourteen cows, several pigs, and a horse. The man being ill, we could not go all over the farm; but what land I saw seemed fairly cultivated, without, of course, any modern improvements in the way of artificial manure or machinery, farming here being greatly behind that I shall describe later, in the department of the Loire Inférieure. A little way off was a smaller occupation, this time not a hired farm, but a small property belonging to a widow and her three sons. The eldest of these, an intelligent, well-mannered youth, left his plough and courteously accompanied us over what he proudly called 'notre bien.' The land belonging to them consisted of six and a half acres, and they hired

three more, making less than ten acres in all, a small part of which was still brushwood or *landes*. 'It costs so much to clear it,' said the young farmer to me when I said what a loss it was to leave the land uncultivated, and he showed me with great satisfaction a nursery of apple-trees he had lately planted on a strip of cleared ground. For stock they had six or seven cows, three pigs, a horse, and large numbers of geese and poultry. Three or four acres were set aside for corn yearly, the rest of the land being either planted with turnips and cabbages, or left as pasture. The soil seems very productive, and when agricultural implements reach Morbihan, will doubtless bring in large returns; but as it is, only the excessive laboriousness and economy of the French peasant farmers makes it intelligible how they can live and save money out of such holdings. The whole family, mother and three sons, were here, existing and, I have no doubt, accumulating a little, by dint of making the best of everything and spending nothing except what was absolutely necessary. Having surveyed the farm and stock—which mostly live in uncomfortable proximity to the dwelling, the cowhouse often opening out of the family room—we went indoors. The mother could not speak French; but the sons, one of whom had just served his five years as a soldier, were very communicative, and evidently pleased to talk about farming in general and their 'bien.' They showed me what I thought was out of fashion even in old-fashioned Brittany, namely, a granary full of wheat that had been threshed after harvest by the now unheard of flail. Steam-threshing

has reached some parts of the Loire Inférieure, but the ponderous machine has not yet amazed and delighted the farmers of Morbihan.

Our hosts pressed us to taste their cyder and rye-bread—both very good; and whilst partaking of the latter heartily, for I was hungry, I had leisure to observe the room. It was a large apartment, the floor —I mean the ground, for floor it had not—was very dirty, and the furniture was good, presses and bedsteads being of dark carved wood. There was a bedstead in every corner, for, strange to say, it is customary for all the members of a family to sleep in one room—a fact which is all the more astonishing when the general good moral conduct and well-being of these peasant farmers are considered. There was a beautiful old carved wardrobe, with brass clasps, all as bright as gold, and the whole interior was an odd mixture of squalor and solid ease, if not comfort. The cow-house and piggeries led out of the room, and over-head was the granary. The house itself formed part of what is here called a village, in other words, a row of half-a-dozen tenements, with a little lake of liquid manure in front, and each possessing its separate dung-heap close to the door. Such a village contains several families, who are mostly tenants of the farmer. Not far off was another small farm, also possessed by a widow, her grown-up daughter, and one son, by whom we were received with equal cordiality. All were at work when we arrived, and the son, a splendid young fellow of the true Breton type, was helping a bright-looking girl with her milk-pails. 'Is that your wife, Jean Marie?' asked Marie Louise; whereupon the

youth blushed up to his ears, and said, 'Not yet; but she may be one day.' The two made a charming rustic picture. Here also were evidences of considerable well-being; but the farm and farming processes so much resembled those already described, that it is not worth while entering into particulars about them. The widow brought out of her linen-press—an exceedingly beautiful piece of old furniture—specimens of her homespun linen, and was evidently much gratified at our admiration of it. She showed us everything outdoors and in, and among other novelties was the bakehouse, which in these parts is always out of doors, and only used once a week or fortnight. The autumn afternoon was fast drawing in, but all were busy at work out of doors; and this goes on, not only in summer, but all the year round. In the winter even these people—often owners of the land, be it remembered—get up at four o'clock in the morning, the women to spin, the men to litter the cattle, and they work till ten at night. We have nothing of this laboriousness and thrift in England; and no wonder, since here the peasant possesses the soil and toils for his children, whilst with us he toils for his employer only. When help is used, it is generally that of women and boys, who are boarded and clothed by the year, and receive not quite two pounds ten yearly for wages. But the farmer and the farmeress do as much of the work as possible themselves. It is only by reason of this economy and making the best of everything that they are enabled to make money as they do.

These examples may be taken as fair specimens of

peasant properties and buildings in Morbihan, where as yet new agricultural ideas and social progress generally have made slow way. Domestic economy and hygiene, even the commonest requirements of hygiene, are here wanting; yet the people look robust and intelligent, whilst their moral character stands high; and, as is well known, they form as frugal and industrious a population as any in France.

The other farms I visited were in quite another direction, and upon an earlier occasion, namely, in the commune of Nozay, Loire Inférieure. And here a hint to the enquiring traveller. Let him not be deterred from such investigations as these by fear of appearing obtrusive. There are no more courteous people on the face of the earth than these Breton peasant farmers; and, on being told your errand, they will leave their stock-feeding or even ploughing to show you their land and their cattle — the two things of which they are justly proud. The notion that you have come on purpose to see their farms and method of farming pleases them, and I met with a polite reception on every occasion.

The farms here are mostly let on exactly the same plan as tenant occupations with us, namely, a fixed yearly rent per acre, though they are still called *métairies*, doubtless because the *métairie* or half-profit system has not long been supplanted by the new. The first I visited consisted of about a hundred acres, hired at a rent of a pound an acre, and stocked with a team of six oxen, eighteen cows, besides pigs, geese, rabbits and poultry. Flax, corn, buckwheat, cabbages for cattle, turnips, and beetroot, are the principal crops,

about a third of the farm being pasture and brush-wood. I found here an enormous improvement upon the agricultural methods of Morbihan. The land was clean, artificial manures were used, and corn was threshed by machinery, thanks to the example set by Grand Jouan, the great agricultural school of Western France, which I shall describe further on. The farmer's wife, who was feeding pigs with her bare feet thrust in sabots, conducted us to the kitchen, a large clean apartment, leading into another, the bedroom of master and mistress and best room of the family. In the kitchen were bedsteads for the sons and daughters, and in both hand-some wardrobes and clothes-presses, and other evidences of ease and well-being. The poor woman seemed suffering, and talked a good deal about the necessity of hard work and early rising, in order to make ends meet. Three o'clock in summer and four o'clock in winter, to bed at ten, both summer and winter, were the family hours, most of the spinning being done by candle-light in winter-time. In a shed were six women, paid day labourers, preparing flax for the spinning-wheel, who receive a franc or franc and a half per diem, men's wages being two francs, the general custom being to board both men and women servants, as in Morbihan. Whilst we were talking upon various farming matters, a beggar came up, who received a coin much as a matter of course, and went off, beggars or *chercheurs de pain* being still regarded here as kindly as in the olden time. In Mor-bihan, farmers have not yet begun to grumble, but here, where much more capital was circulating and

farming was an affair of skill and enterprise, the usual cry was that it was getting harder and harder to make money by the land.

The next farm was about the same size, at very nearly the same rent, the prices varying from forty to fifty francs per hectare, but in a much better state of cultivation. The proprietor, in blouse and sabots, was busy feeding his stock, but good-naturedly called some one to take his place, and accompanied us round the farm. We were first shown the pigs, long-backed, large-eared, tame creatures, very well kept; then the cows, of the breed called here *Duram*, that is to say a mixed Durham and Breton breed; the real Breton breed is very pretty, small, and black and white, but the mixed is highly prized. There were twenty cowkind here, including the team of four to draw the plough; a horse was also kept. With natural pride the good farmer showed us his fields, which were clean, and gave evidence of good farming. The clover was up for spring feeding—it was early in October—the land ploughed ready for wheat-sowing, and other processes advanced. A field of turnips grown upon bone-phosphate was pointed out with especial pride; and our host, who spoke very good French and was of quite superior intelligence, told us that he had entirely learned the use of artificial manures from the agricultural school of Grand Jouan. 'Grand Jouan teaches us how to farm,' he said; 'of course we farmers could not afford to make experiments or try machinery; but Grand Jouan, which is maintained by the State, can afford to try new plans and lose by them. Ah! farming is no longer what it

used to be. We had need have our wits about us now to make ends meet, and we must do as others do to keep ahead of affairs at all.' In spite of this habitual grumbling, characteristic of farmers in all parts of the world, it is well known that these peasant proprietors and métayers are in many cases rich. 'That good man has an income of eighty pounds from saved capital a year,' said my guide to me, and I have no doubt many of his neighbours are in the same case. They lay by as much as they can in order to buy land, and every year a larger portion is falling into the hands of the peasants.

CHAPTER VII.

A WINTER IN NANTES.

NANTES, which was my head-quarters during my year in Western France, is a town of many resources. It is an artistic town to begin with, and the lover of music and the drama may here gratify his tastes at little cost, whilst the student will find ample occupation in its large public library, open to all, summer and winter, the proceedings of its learned societies, and the admirable scientific and literary lectures of the École des Arts et des Sciences, delivered gratuitously every evening of the week. Instruction is indeed doled out with a liberal hand. The school of music, or Conservatoire, connected with the celebrated Conservatoire of Paris, offers free musical instruction of a very high order to pupils of both sexes, whilst the courses given at the École des Arts et des Sciences, which ladies attend also, afford systematic teaching in botany, chemistry, physic, history, and so on. The concerts of chamber music given by the Philharmonic Society are first-rate, the opera very good indeed; there is a picture gallery, several museums; and besides that, staple entertainments lasting from the beginning of the winter till the spring and summer, subscription concerts, a skating rink, and

popular recreations of every imaginable description. Nor must the church music be left out from the list. On fête days, no one should omit high mass at the Cathedral or principal churches; and if he happens to be in Nantes during the month of May, or Mois de Marie, he will find that evening musical services are given two or three times a week, the choicest compositions of Mozart, Cherubini, Pergolesi, Gounod and others, being rendered by the leading Nantais musicians. Church music and church ceremonies form a considerable item in what is generally understood by the word recreation among all classes here. On certain days in the year—Holy Thursday, for instance, which is a holiday—the churches are crowded from morning till night, and nothing but church-going seems to be thought of by the greater portion of holiday-makers. The spectacle of the *Reposoirs* on Holy Thursday, more or less theatrical as the case may be, is lugubrious in the extreme, and perhaps should be described. The *Reposoirs*, then, are the recumbent figures of the Saviour, which are upon this occasion placed under a pall or canopy decorated with flowers and wax lights, at the extreme end of the church facing the altar; and outside the railing, on a dais, lies a crucifix to be kissed by all the faithful. Soldiers guard the church doors, and a perpetual stream of people, of all ranks and ages, enter at one door and pass out at the other, a double file of young ladies in fashionable costumes loudly begging alms for the poor. I went into half-a-dozen churches on the afternoon of Holy Thursday and found the same thing going on; also to the small chapels attached

to the convents and monasteries, some of which I visited as well. In one—that of the cloistered sisterhood of the White Sisters—we find about twenty nuns symbolically placed with their backs to the spectators—in other words, the outside world—mumbling prayers or responses, whilst people went in and out, dropping coins into the platter held out to them. The money collected on these occasions must be considerable, especially in the evening, when the music of the Stabat is given, and the churches are just as full as they can possibly be. Good Friday follows, a day on which even the most lukewarm Catholics fast, in other words, go without their early cup of coffee and eat no meat—no great privation considering the dainty little dishes made up without it: witness the little manual called 'Cuisine du Carême.' This fasting will not bear inspection. The butchers' shops are shut on Good Friday, it is true, and that day is said to be the only butchers' holiday of the year. What cook worthy the name could not produce an excellent dinner out of the abundance of fish, fruit, vegetables, and dairy produce afforded at Nantes? Then there is what is called *volaille maigre*, which is permitted on fast days, namely water-fowl and other kinds of game that answers to what our poultry keepers call running fowls; in other words, game that has had no chances of getting fat. And the wine-soups, again. Is it to be supposed that a good wine-soup will leave a craving for bouillon? And the creams and the salads, the lobsters, the early asparagus and artichokes, that find their way on to the bishops' tables. Is it any hardship to substitute these for roast mut-

ton and fowl? What struck me about this Good Friday fasting, was the insincerity of it. It is a make-believe, a sham, and an utter delusion, as all who have lived in Catholic countries learn by experience.

But to return to the artistic resources of Nantes and its general attractions. The Nantais may be described as an opera-going, pleasure-loving, and, *par excellence* pastry-eating people. On the first representation of *Les Huguenots* at the Grand Theatre this season 500 persons were refused admittance. If the Jardin des Plantes is illuminated at night, or a balloon goes off, or any other popular entertainment is given, everybody goes; whilst the general capacity for eating pastry—which is, by the way, excellent—is evinced by the pastrycooks' shops at every corner. Yet this prevailing cheerfulness is hardly the result of climate, that of Nantes being much more English than French; in fact, as near like the climate of our south and western coast as can be. Wintry weather consists of storms of wind and rain; the summer heats are varied by long periods of grey, over-cast, rainy days, and the mean temperature is so high that tropical plants remain out of doors all the year round. The avenue of magnolias in the Jardin des Plantes is said to be the finest in Europe, and the camellias, which are equally magnificent, generally bloom in February. I find in my diary for this year, 1876—an unusually cold and wet one at Nantes—the following notice: 'March—Early this month the camellias out of doors in the Jardin des Plantes and elsewhere in full bloom; on the 19th, rhododendrons in bloom, also pansies and other

flowers.' This shows how advanced, even under unfavourable circumstances, is vegetation here, and in spite of the proverbial raininess evinced by the proverb :—

> Pleut-il toujours à Nantes,
> Sonne-t-on toujours à Angers,
> Fait-on toujours l'amour à Saumur,
> Mange-t-on toujours à Tours?

The mildness of the climate is proverbial also, and there must surely be a proverb somewhere about the softness and purity of the Loire water, which is only to be compared to the waters of the Nile. Nor is good fish less plentiful than good water. Nantes, *le pays Nantais*, is eminently noted for its abundance of good fare, be it fish, flesh, or fowl, to say nothing of fruit and vegetables, which latter are not, as in less favoured countries, the luxuries of the rich, but the daily portion of the poor.

Perhaps a word or two about the desirability of Nantes as a residence may be welcome to my readers, seeing how many parents prefer to educate their children abroad, and how rich is this city in educational resources. In the first place, it must be admitted that generally speaking Nantes is not a sociable town; but, with this exception, strangers will have nothing to complain of. They will not, perhaps, find what is called society ; but they will have a choice of first-rate teachers, every facility for organizing domestic life on a comfortable scale, in some respects fewer expenses than at home, and for those who desire it a climate resembling that of Cornwall and Devonshire. And with regard to education, a word or two. Languages

are not well taught in France, and it would be a great mistake to bring young people here if you want them to learn any other language but French. All the so-called accomplishments, however, are well taught, and with regard to more serious studies the scientific and literary courses already mentioned leave nothing to be desired; the fees of professors are infinitely lower than with us—about a third less—and the cost of the Lycée, or public boys' school, or the great Livet school for technical instruction, is moderate. But the time is gone by when we can go abroad to economize. Taxation in France—and it is much the same in Germany—is raising the price of necessaries; and residents here tell me they are paying Paris prices for meat, groceries, and wine, and, in fact, everything but domestic servants, house-rent, and country produce. A stranger is struck by the dearness of little things here. Thus, accustomed as we are to our penny post, we feel aggrieved in France at having to pay twopence-half-penny when we write to a friend living in the neighbouring town; we are no less dissatisfied at having to give double the price for sugar to which we are habituated, while it certainly seems hard to pay six, seven, or eight shillings a pound for tea, and eighteen-pence a pound for candles sold in England for a shilling. But the milliards of the war indemnity had to be paid, and so people submit resignedly, though nothing but French habits of economy could make the burden bearable. We English light our fires the first chilly day in September, and usually do not put them out till June. A fire in cold weather we look upon as a matter of course, whilst on the contrary to the

majority of French people it is quite a luxury. Generally speaking, one may affirm that a fire is never thought of in a French household unless it is freezing indoors. That wretched contrivance, the *chaufferette*, or foot-warmer, is substituted; and if a fire is lighted in exceptionally cold weather, directly your back is turned, the servants let it out, so that on your return from a walk you find the room as cold as ever. Warming a room, much less warming a house, is indeed a wholly unknown art, except in the few French families by whom English comfort has been learned and imitated. If you call on an acquaintance when the thermometer is several degrees below freezing point, you are entertained in a room without a fire, unless, perhaps, a match is put to the wood in your honour. The lady of the house, the servants, the music-teachers, the children at the piano, all have their foot-warmers, and it is wonderful what an amount of cold they will bear so long as their feet are kept burning hot by means of a few ashes in a wooden box. The chaufferettes are carried to church, are carried to the theatre, are in fact as necessary to the existence of a Frenchwoman as a fashionable bonnet, and she can no more dispense with the one in winter than with the other all the year round. The rooms are of course uncarpeted, a deliciously cool and cleanly habit in summer, but very chilly and depressing to the spirits in the winter; and what with this and the absence of fire, no wonder you hear of nothing but colds, influenza, and rheumatic pains from the beginning of the winter till the end. A handful of fire is looked upon as a luxury for the sick, the aged, and the very rich, whilst

a blazing hearth from morning till night is unheard of. Whether life is shortened by such a process of hardening on the one hand, or what our French neighbours call English coddling on the other, is another matter; but there is one thing certain, namely, that if firing is not burned it has not to be paid for, and thus a considerable item of daily expenditure is saved.

But how one misses the friendly hearth! What a blank it leaves in French domestic life! And the tea-table! what a homely poetry is awakened in every English heart at the hissing of the tea-kettle—music unknown to French ears! Tea, indeed, understood in the sense we understand it, is a meal unknown on this side of La Manche, and there is nothing in French life to make up for its loss. When dinner is over, the men go to their *cercles* or cafés, the ladies retire to their nurseries or bed-rooms; lights are put out in the dining-room—for the drawing-room, or *salle de compagnie*, is never used except on grand occasions—and as far as the family is concerned, the day is over. And another habit strikes us as oddly. In England women dress for their husbands and their homes, in France they dress for the world. An English lady, as a rule, no matter in what rank of life, changes her dress for the evening—that is to say, for the home and the family, though when she descends to the family-breakfast at eight o'clock she is so dressed as to be fit to receive any visitors. But a Frenchwoman acts quite differently. If you inadvertently call upon her before three o'clock in the afternoon, you are sure to find her in dressing-gown and slippers; an hour after she will quit the house to pay visits, or do her shop-

ping, as faultlessly attired as if she was going to a fashionable kettle-drum—an unknown entertainment here. She will have boots, bonnet, mantle, gloves, everything apparently new and according to the latest fashion, and as soon as she returns home, the finery is put aside till the next day. She would no more appear in the streets in a shabby dress, in a waterproof cloak, or in a dress cut after the fashion of last year, than her English neighbour would be seen at midday, unwashed, unkempt, slippered, dressing-gowned—in fact, dishevelled and untidy. So much for taste; and granting that a Frenchwoman does dress well, we must also admit that for the most part she bestows much more time, thought, and money upon her toilette than we do in England. How can she help looking upon dress as the paramount necessity of life? From her earliest babyhood, as I have before mentioned, her attention is drawn to the cut of her garments, and at five years old she is as carefully dressed for a walk as at twenty. In England, Germany, or Switzerland, it is not so; in the latter countries the simplicity of dress among all ranks is refreshing to behold; but, alas! we cannot hope such a state of things will last long, and already among ourselves a passion for finery is one of the most discouraging characteristics of the average working woman.

There are, however, certain features in French domestic life we may look upon with envy. Take the cookery, for example! What have we that corresponds to the admirable pot-au-feu, that compensates for any defects in the repast that follows after; that puts a cold, hungry, worn-out human being at once in

a genial frame of mind; that is a luxury within reach of all but the poorest? If a cold dinner could be excused by anything, it would be by the excellent *bouillon* or *soupe maigre* that precedes any dinner in France; but such an offence against economy and good taste as a cold dinner is never committed by a French cook or housekeeper. By dint of time, skill, and contrivance, they manage to supply the daily *potage* and its accompaniment of two or three well cooked dishes all the year round. Everything is turned to account, and vegetables are used in very large quantities. Whoever heard of a vegetable soup in England? yet at the same time vegetable soups are both nutritious and appetising. Certainly we ought not to rest in our beds till we have taken a lesson or two from French cooks; and it must be admitted that if an ill-dressed Frenchwoman is rare, one unskilled in housekeeping is rarer still. She is eminently a *femme d'intérieur*, dividing her time between her toilette, her housekeeping, and her children; and whilst we are accustomed to reproach German women for being domestic drudges, we must acquit their French sisters of the staple charge of frivolity, and blame them also for giving too much time to household cares, being like Martha troubled about many things. It strikes a stranger oddly to see the tables turned in France, the reputed land of politeness, and instead of men waiting on the women, it is the women who wait on the men. In a soirée, for example, the ladies of the house hand round tea and other refreshments, and the gentlemen visitors, whether young or old, married or single, sit by, never

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offering to rise and help them. The spectacle of a husband putting coals on the fire for his wife—supposing there were coals to put on—would certainly call for remark in France, whilst a gentleman spending the evening at a friend's house would no more dream of handing a young lady a glass of *sirop* or a cup of tea than of flying. It is her place to do this, and so she does it, and she never expects anything else.

This notion about French politeness must, indeed, be accepted with many reservations. A Frenchman will certainly raise his hat upon occasions when an Englishman would keep it on his head ; but he will elbow ladies off the pavement, will deliberately address them with a cigar in his mouth, and will do many worse things an Englishman would rather submit to flaying alive, than commit in the proximity of women. But the constantly reiterated Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle, are certainly pleasant forms of politeness, especially in the mouths of the working classes towards each other, and herein we might perhaps take a hint or two. A French maid will come in, saying that, 'Monsieur le facteur, Monsieur le boucher,' and so on, want to speak to Madame, just as naturally as she will say 'Monsieur le curé, Monsieur le médecin,' and under the most unexpected circumstances this kind of politeness is never forgotten. I was one day purchasing stamps, and a little ragged boy came in. 'Permettez-moi de servir Monsieur,' said the lady behind the counter ; and Monsieur was politely supplied with his halfpenny-worth of tobacco, because he seemed in a hurry. There can be no doubt that affability among all ranks, and upon all occasions, is

commoner than with us, but it means much more among the lower than the higher classes of society.

If, however, we are apt to overvalue our neighbours in some respects, they possess other qualities to which we have as yet done scant justice. Take, for example, the invaluable habit of economy. In England we hardly understand what economy is ; but a lengthy residence in France makes the meaning of the word clear, and also makes it easy to see how the millions sterling were paid into Prussian coffers, leaving the country to all appearances as flourishing as before. It is not only in one thing, but in every circumstance of daily life, that the persistent and inrooted habit of economy may be studied. Were it otherwise, indeed, how could the bulk of the French population live ? When we consider that the ordinary fee charged by a country doctor is two francs, and that professors in public schools and employés of the Government receive salaries varying from one to two hundred a year, that private teachers are paid from two to three and a half francs a lesson, we can easily understand why economies never thought of in England are so necessary here. Yet in one sense the French middle classes are better off than with us, though receiving about a third or a quarter the amount of income. Almost every one possesses either a small estate in land, or invested capital or house-property. The family doctor, the lawyer, the well-established professor, the journalist, the Government official, though all living as modestly as can be, have their farms and houses, and very often spend their holidays regularly at their own little country villa or cottage, instead of going into

lodgings or furnished houses as we do. Roughly speaking, you may take it for granted that out of every dozen people you meet in the upper middle classes, eleven will be landed proprietors—on a small scale, perhaps, but landed proprietors all the same. Land is the favourite investment alike of the peasant, the professional man, and the rich merchant; and such a state of things naturally tends to habits of economy, and also to the equalisation of wealth. Of course, in a small overcrowded country like our own, with a right of primogeniture, it cannot be so; but such a division of the good things of the earth does the heart good to behold in France, and explains, more than any amount of treatises on political economy, the enormous wealth, cheerfulness and well-being of the country.

Whilst we are on this subject, we cannot help touching on that of the *dot*, or marriage dowry, another incontestable explanation of the inrooted thrift of the French people. A *dot*, necessary and habitual in all cases, is obligatory in some—witness the marriage regulations affecting the army. A French officer can no more marry a portionless girl than he can now marry a young lady reputed 'fast,' even though no more weightier charge can be brought against her. Formerly, so long as the *dot* was assured, the young lady's character was left to her lover's discretion; but since the last war, very stringent rules have been laid down on this subject. The intending bridegroom—and this not in case of his betrothed being an orphan or ward, but always—is obliged to forward to the War Minister certificates of her good conduct, signed

by the mayor of the town in which she lives. A girl respectably brought up and living quietly with her parents is subject to the same inquiry as any other, and all kinds of forms and ceremonies have to be gone through before satisfying the all-important Administration that—firstly, the lady is irreproachable in manners and morals, and secondly that her little property is as secure as law can make it. Doubtless, seeing the woeful corruption of the French army, as evidenced in every phase of the recent war, these precautions are necessary, but it strikes an English mind oddly. An Englishman finds it hard that he is not allowed to marry his sister-in-law; what would he say, if, in the first place, he must find out how much money his bride will bring him, and in the second must go to the mayor of her native town for a certificate of her good conduct? But a French officer has to submit to all this, though we do not hear that the lady receives at his hands a certificate of good conduct also, evidently by far the most necessary precaution of the two. But the *prestige du militaire* is sadly lost in France now. In some towns the officers are not received in what is considered good society, and not without abundant reason. Whether the Administration can effect the desired reformation is quite another matter. It seems to me that it is rather the mothers and fathers than the laws of France which are here to blame, and that such a reformation should begin in the home, and during the earliest years. Spoiled children are in France the rule, and not the exception; the child is the idol, the tyrant, the miniature fop or coquette of the house, and being indulged in

every caprice from its earliest years, is not likely to grow up a reasonable human being. In Germany and England it is not so. In an English home, the mother, the wife, the mistress of the house, is the first person considered; in Germany, the lord and master, the husband and father; in France, it is the child, the boy, the little gay Lothario that is to be; and considering that he is spoiled as far as spoiling can go till he goes to school, and is then guarded as carefully as an idiot or a young thief, it is not to be wondered at that sowing wild oats in France is taken as a matter of course, and that at sixteen a boy emancipated from thraldom runs into vicious courses as naturally as into personal vanities, such as the 'swell' style of dressing, and the perpetual cigar. Our public schools develope manliness and a sense of honour in a boy; the German system of education and life generally teaches alike young and old to bow down and adore the mighty *Pflicht*, the unsparing, immaculate, all-saving, all-purifying Duty; but, alas! in this pleasant, genial, favoured land of France, it is not so. Inclination and the enjoyment of the hour form the ideal of youth, and bitterly and woefully have the mothers and fathers of France paid for the too soft training accorded their darlings.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WINTER IN NANTES—*continued.*

I HAVE described Nantes as a town of many resources, and I feel that much yet remains to be said on the subject. In the first place, though the Bank Holiday Act and the early closing movement have in some ways given the English clerk, artizan, and labourer an advantage over his French fellows, in others the latter are by far the most privileged of the two. As is only to be expected in a democratic country, instruction and amusement are more equally distributed, and class distinctions are less observable. Our workmen get higher wages and more holidays; but alas! of what avail are these without the opportunities of fitly employing them? Take the library of the British Museum, for example. What workman has even so much as glanced at the vast reading-room? Or the National Gallery, which, being persistently closed on Sunday, is therefore inaccessible to the vast majority, whose sole resting day it is? Again, there are the Zoological Gardens. What an inestimable boon it would be to throw those beautiful gardens open free on Sundays, and how small a sacrifice to the rich subscribers, who can go as often as they please in the week days! In France it is not so, and you have only

to enter picture galleries, museums, botanical gardens, and public libraries on Sundays to convince yourself that the French workman—and why should not the English do so too?—does really improve the opportunities of instruction held out to him, and will greedily seize upon intellectual amusement and recreation, if put in his way. It would be difficult to enter the Public Library at Nantes, for instance, without finding workmen in it, some reading for profit, others for pleasure. A little lad in blue blouse will politely walk up to the librarian, ask for the 'Journal pour Tous,' and, sitting down, enjoy pictures and stories for the half hour between working times; a soldier will ask for a book of travels, and read, assiduously making notes; or a mechanic will consult some technical work in search of information necessary for his occupation. All this I have seen, and have sometimes counted half-a-dozen workmen, even on a week day, in the Nantes reading-room, which is open all the year round to townspeople and foreigners, without any kind of form or ceremony. You have only to ask for the book you want, or help yourself to the works of reference lining the walls of the pleasant, well-arranged reading-room. The library of a hundred thousand volumes is supported by the town, which pays a head librarian, two sub-librarians, and a porter, besides spending a certain sum in new books yearly. In the winter time, it is open every evening from seven till ten, and I should like to know where we could find the same thing in England. I admit there is no country where public and private liberality are seen on a more magnificent scale than at home; yet good public libraries, accessible without

charge or form of entry to all, are certainly not to be found in most country towns, as is the case here. Several English towns that I know well, of equal size and importance, are certainly behind-hand in this respect. Libraries there are on a small scale, but they are not maintained for the benefit of all; they are not gratuitous, and they are never opened on a Sunday.

Again, take the *École des Lettres et des Sciences* at Nantes, which provides free courses of instruction of a high order throughout nine months of the year; literature, science and art, chemistry, botany, physics, mathematics, history, architecture, are taught by first-rate lecturers every evening in the week, and as I attended some of them I can speak with authority on the excellence of the teaching thus imparted, and the unfailing attendance of working men—not in a large proportion, certainly; but there was always the *ouvrier* element, and as attentive and interested as any. Anything like these systematic courses, always gratuitous, be it remembered, always given in the evening, and always open to both sexes, certainly never came under my notice in England. Good teaching of a high order, and accessible to rich and poor, men and women, without any charge whatever, for nine months out of the twelve, is rare, as far as my experience goes, unknown with us at home. Some of these lectures are of a kind to be generally interesting; a course I heard upon Rabelais, for instance, a subject so handled by a skilful professor as to be attractive to all and objectionable to none. In fact, too much praise cannot be given to

such a scheme, affording, as it does, the kind of instruction not to be obtained at home, and bringing all classes together for the highest objects. It will be seen, then, that the principle of centralization does not exist to anything like the same extent as with us. If we want to read at a library or study a certain science, we have to go to London; but at Nantes, a city of 118,000 and odd inhabitants, we find every opportunity of instruction the ordinary student may require. Thus appended to the Jardin des Plantes is such a practical school of botany as might, with little trouble and expense, be kept up in every English country town. Here, in a garden set apart, you find the various families of plants and grasses arranged in groups, with the names appended to each, so that a teacher of botany has always within reach that illustrative teaching of the eye, otherwise not to be obtained without great trouble and fatigue. It is of little use to teach botany without adding the practical part as well, yet how seldom do we find such an appendage as this I speak of to public gardens! There is an 'Economic' garden, it is true, in the Botanical Gardens, Regent's Park, but these gardens are never upon any occasion thrown open gratuitously to the public. They are inaccessible to all but subscribers, *i.e.* the rich, and thus the Economic department, as it is called, fails of its purpose. The Jardin des Plantes of Nantes, a really magnificent pleasure-ground, is open from early morning till late at night, summer and winter, and the botanical lectures delivered there are free to all. The gardens are beautifully kept, the collection of specimens in

the educational department ample, and you never go without finding some student or other among the beds, which not only contain specimens of the common European flora, but tropical and other rare plants, and a larger variety of flowering shrubs than I ever remember to have seen.

Nor must the Museum of Natural History and Archæology, or the Picture Gallery, be forgotten, all of which are always open and always crowded by working people on Sundays. The Picture Gallery possesses specimens of the modern and living French school—Ingres, Ary Scheffer, Delacroix, Greuze, Horace Vernet, Hippolyte Flandrin, Corot, Millet, Courbet, Daubigny, Gerôme, and Hamon, of our own day, *inter alios*. The 'old masters' are generally copies, but as every year fresh acquisitions are made, the collection increases in value as illustrative of French art. One of the finest Gerômes ever exhibited in England—'Le Prisonnier'—is here, and other good examples of living painters. A workman may therefore, without ever setting foot in the Louvre or the Luxembourg, learn something about painting; and, on a smaller scale, the same thing is seen at Quimper in Britanny, Angers, and other country towns.

There can be no doubt that these circumstances do greatly tell upon the mind, and consequently the taste, of the French workman. Accustomed as he is, from his earliest years, to see beautiful things and exercise his critical faculty, it is only natural that he should display more discrimination, more finish, more elegance in his work, than his English or German fellow.

The ordinary French artisan is more artistic than an English one; his touch is more delicate, his eye more fastidious; and what are delicacy of touch and fastidiousness but the results of education? I have heard a couple of workmen criticise a picture in the Nantes collection as seriously and intelligently as if they were artists; and the same thing may be observed in museums and theatres. The opera here is very good indeed, the prices low, ranging from sixpence to three or four shillings, and every part is crowded whenever a favourite piece is given. Opera-going, in fact, is as much relished as in Germany, and is the luxury alike of rich and poor. Why should we not have operas in provincial English towns as well? As a rule, whenever we want amusement of a high order, or indeed of any order, we must go to London for it. A good concert given once or twice a year, and charged for at an exorbitantly high price, is all the recreation of a musical kind we can obtain in the country. A theatre, if theatre there be, is a wretched affair, and we have nothing in the way of church music to compensate for the loss. I have before mentioned the church music to be had all the year round at Nantes, especially on fête days and during the month of May. The glorious music of Mozart and Pergolesi, the delicious compositions of Rossini and Gounod, are given at the church in the very best manner, and the poorest can enjoy them, the only charge being a sou for the use of a chair. I have also drawn attention to the Conservatoire, or School of Music, which affords gratuitous teaching in music to both sexes—another illustration of the noble

liberality in France regarding higher education. Doubtless our French neighbours may learn much from ourselves, especially in practical considerations, some questions of hygiene, the legal position of women, &c.; but they certainly set us an example of generosity in the matter of intellectual advancement. Private munificence is unequalled among ourselves; yet whilst our museums, public libraries, and picture galleries are closed to working men on the only entire holiday of the week, and no gratuitous opportunities of artistic and literary education are put in their way, we cannot wonder at the low tastes they exhibit, and at the lamentable manner in which their holidays and spare money are too often spent. The French workman has longer hours and lower pay than ours, yet, by virtue of more favourable social and intellectual conditions, he is superior as a human being, his tastes are more elevated, his amusements more refined, his bearing gentler. The *Monsieur* and *Madame* with which working men and women perpetually greet each other, the raising of the hat to friend and neighbour, as well as to superior and employer, both mean something, and indicate a more advanced social condition than is the case with us. Again, the feeling of independence imparted by the acquisition of a bit of land, a house, or a little money invested in the funds, greatly adds to the dignity of a French workman. He is neither obsequious nor boorish, and I have before mentioned the courtesy with which I was received in out-of-the-way country places by peasant proprietors or occupiers. Dressed in the habitual blouse, and having their bare feet

thrust into sabots, they were yet perfectly free from any kind of awkwardness, shyness, or familiarity. Anything like subservience I never found. The peasant lad conducting you over his father's fields, or the driver of a diligence, will converse just as naturally and easily as if he were addressing some one in his own rank of life ; he feels that it is his duty to afford whatever information he may possess, and the fear of being looked upon as over-familiar would never occur to him. Every one is polite to every one. The railway official is just as respectful to the third-class passengers as the first, and if you penetrate into regions where railways do not exist, you may find the principle of equality carried a little too far, the inside passengers of a diligence being allowed to smoke without asking permission either of the conductor or their neighbours. In England the lines of class demarcation are nowhere more persistently kept in view with us than in amusements, where we have prices so arranged as nicely to distinguish the very rich from the less rich, the moderately well-off from the poor, and so on. Here, except at the opera, only one price, and that sufficiently low to be within most people's means, is charged, thus bringing all classes together. When the Nantes Botanical Gardens are illuminated, and orchestral out-of-door concerts are given, a franc is charged for admission indiscriminately, and the attendance of one class is just as large as that of the other. All these facts must be taken into consideration when studying French life and manners; they show how fundamentally democratic is the national character, and how

inrooted are the elementary principles of the Great Revolution, in spite of such temporary aberrations as the Empire. No wonder that French travellers in England regard the condition of things with us as an improved feudalism! No wonder that English travellers in France are a little surprised at the different position held by the people. 'Le peuple voilà le Dieu qui inspire les vrais philosophes,' said a Socialist philosopher, and it is hardly necessary to say, he was a Frenchman.

But it is not only by Socialist philosophers that the sovereignty of the people is now recognised and done homage to in France. Since the civil war of 1871 no efforts have been spared by the clerical party to win over the working classes, and no efforts have been more crowned with success than the *Cercle ouvrier Catholique*, or Catholic Club, to be found now in every French town. It is quite worth while for the stranger to see one of these clubs, for they will give him a very fair idea of their liberality and practicalness, of an example the Republicans would do well to follow. In the poorer quarter of Nantes is a *cercle* which for spaciousness, resources, and management, might be envied by many of the upper classes. The garden was one of those large, old-fashioned pleasure-grounds, well planted with trees, still to be found in the older suburbs of the city, and the house belonging to it is admirably adapted for the new purpose to which it is applied. There are billiard-rooms, refreshment-rooms, a gymnasium, a theatre for private theatricals; any means, indeed, of recreation on a large scale, and for the price of six

sous monthly—rather more than a halfpenny a week. A little chapel is, of course, attached to the building, but this is only used on fête days and special occasions. The airy, pleasant rooms, the shady walks, the beautiful views from the terrace, may well entice the workman after his day's work, and I hear that the subscribers already number a hundred and sixty; this is the second year of the club. Everything is supplied here but books. Books, be it remembered, do not come within the scope of Roman Catholic institutions for the people. Working men may be amused by billiards, gymnastics, music, religious processions, theatricals —but not by knowledge. Add a good reading-room and library to the institution indeed, and it would be a *Cercle Catholique* no longer. We cannot help regretting that the objects of these beautiful gardens and attractive clubhouses should be restricted within such limits. Their organisation is admirable; they are in every respect but one admirably calculated to improve the condition of the working classes. Nevertheless, so long as pleasure and recreation are afforded only, and instruction banished from the programme, they can merely be considered as obstructive to progress and nothing else. With the best will in the world, the Republicans cannot meet such competitors in a fair field. The Church is rich, the Republic is poor. The Church can hold out bribes as costly as it pleases; the Republic, with its cheap, plain-speaking literature, cannot be said to hold out any bribes at all. Is it not natural that a workman, after his long day's labour, will prefer a game of billiards in the *Cercle Catholique* to reading M. Gambetta's halfpenny newspaper

in his attic? And naturally he feels that the government is best which is ready to do its best for him, to give him recreation like his more favoured fellows, to brighten daily toil by the prospect of beautiful gardens and luxurious retreats at the end.

Then if the Cercles do not instruct, they do at least effect a change for the better in conduct. Drinking is only allowed on a moderate scale, and the use of bad language, quarrelling and other improprieties, punished by dismissal. When a *Cercle ouvrier Catholique* springs up, therefore, the neighbourhood is improved in manners. The cabarets are less frequented, wives and mothers whose bread winners come home sober at night bless the Church and despise the Republic, which does so little to make their homes happy! If the Republic looks to its true interests, it will study those of working men and of women generally; for as a recent writer has truly said, 'Les femmes et les ouvriers, voilà les esclaves de la civilisation moderne!'

CHAPTER IX.

WALKS AND DRIVES IN THE LOIRE INFÉRIEURE.

NANTES has justly been compared to a spider, the body of which is small, but the limbs long and numerous, and covering a large circumference. It is difficult to say where the town ends and the suburbs begin; still more difficult for a stranger to find his way into the rustic lanes, glades and groves that lie within easy walking distance of the city. The better plan is to go to the omnibus-stand on fine days and take the first omnibus that starts anywhere. You are sure to be set down on the borders of the country, and by dint of a little perseverance may soon find yourself amid scenery, not grandiose or wild as in some parts of Brittany, nor romantic nor picturesque as in others, yet possessed of a quiet, winning grace and tender beauty of its own. Low-lying pastures, with rich crops of ox-eyed daisies, flowering grasses and orchids; corn-fields in which the brilliant red poppies, the golden marigolds, and the delicate blue, rose colour, or creamy *bluet* or cornflower—the favourite wild flowers in France—are mingled with the green of the young wheat; little rivulets running amid willow-clothed banks and smooth green meads; glade

opening into glade, with green lanes a yard broad overshadowed by birch and maple, farmsteads and châteaux, here and there smiling little villas with gardens reaching to the road side; richly wooded slopes, and small close shut valleys; wide spaces covered with the fruit, the flowers, and the vegetables that supply the Nantes market—all these you may find, and more, if you know where to go. But Nature here hides her graces coyly, and an impatient traveller might go away under the impression that Nantes had no country resorts at all. By rail and river there are countless excursions within reach; nor should the diligence be forgotten, which takes you in the coupé, if you choose, to delicious little haunts where you can breakfast, dine, or take tea, as the case may be, in wayside inns, and all without expense or fatigue. Then there are the so-called *bateaux mouches*, or little steamers, which take you for twopence-halfpenny some miles down the Loire, setting you down amid country villages, isolated little fishing settlements, each and all characteristic and amusing. You have a dozen places of interest to be seen in a day by rail, or rail, boat, and diligence mixed: such as St. Florent le Veil, Clisson, Ancenis, St. Nazaire, Le Croisic, Pornic, Paimbœuf, and Guérande, some of which I shall describe, and all of which are historic and picturesque. These longer excursions should always be made on a Sunday, when you see the country folks in their holiday trim, and are brought into contact with the light-hearted, pleasure-loving, easily amused *peuple Français*. The churches are so crowded in the morning that there is hardly standing

room left; but after breakfast—in the case of the working people, early dinner—all sally forth in fine weather into the country, unless a balloon ascent, an out-of-door concert, a religious procession, or something else equally attractive, keeps them in town. It is hardly necessary to say that entertainments of any kind, from a concert of chamber music to a distribution of prizes by the mayor and corporation, are given on a Sunday, so as to enable the working people to take part in them. Upon that occasion you see the piquant costumes of the Loire Inférieure to the best advantage. Very little is spent in this Sunday excursioning, drunkenness among the lower classes is much rarer than in England, and everything ends without other excess than that singing in the streets at night to which we find it so difficult to get accustomed.

By far the most novel experience within a few hours' reach of Nantes is that obtained by a Sunday trip to Bourg de Batz, the home of the *paludiers*, or workmen engaged in the salt works, who, in dress, manners, and physique, form a race apart. On a bright Sunday morning in September, I started with some friends from the small station of the Bourse at six o'clock, and amid a crowd of holiday-makers like ourselves reached St. Nazaire at half-past eight. To save time, as we had planned a drive to Bourg de Batz, by way of Escoublac, and on to Guérande, we carried a basket of provisions with us, and breakfasted as we drove along in a low open carriage drawn by a brisk little Breton horse. In many places, except for the Calvaires placed at frequent intervals by the roadside, we might have fancied ourselves in Sussex, so

home-like was the scenery. The air was keen and invigorating, but as we got farther on the clouds grew lighter, and a brilliant sun accompanied us the greater part of the way. Turning off at Pouliguen, we found ourselves in scenery of wilder character, and, excepting for a solitary peasant trudging to church here and there, all was deserted. Between Pouliguen and Bourg de Batz lie the *marais salants* with odd, indescribable effect. The neatly-divided *œillets*, or lakelets of the vast salt marshes, cut up the expanse into a small Rob Roy pattern, each little square of salt water being fenced in by a small path. On either side grow sea-weeds or sea-plants, some in rich blossom as we passed by. The weather was not now sufficiently warm to produce evaporation, and all that we saw of the phenomenon was small flakes of salt sparsely scattered about the surface. No words can give a just idea of this unique spectacle. On either side were fields and fields of smooth, glistening, liquid salt, portioned out into myriads of tiny little lakes of equal size and shallowness, all silvery white in the autumn sunshine; far off the imposing church tower of Bourg de Batz high above the plain, and behind it the sea —to-day calm and smooth as the mimic sea around. As we slowly ascended the hill crowned by the church, a more curious spectacle still awaited us. The people were returning from mass, and to see them it seemed hard to believe that we had left fashionable and cosmopolitan Nantes only a few hours before. Imagination cannot picture a more fantastic or a prettier sight than this stream of church-goers, with prayer-books in hand, who looked in their inimitable costume

as if they had walked straight out of the Middle Ages, instead of living in close proximity to an ironed-out, uniform, nineteenth-century civilization. Picture to yourself, then, a crowd of village folks thus dressed: the men in hats with brims as broad as a banana-leaf, gaily tasselled and braided, vests and undervests reaching to the hips, all gaily coloured and embroidered, and lastly full puffed breeches, knickerbocker trowsers, pantaloons—call them what you will—certainly leg-coverings of more piquant pattern were never invented than the balloon-like garments of creamy-white stuff, tied under the knees with long white ribbons; white stockings and white shoes completed the costume, every part of it being spick and span, as if they were gentlemen masqueraders going to a ball. A masquerade, indeed, this procession might have been, but for the prayer-books and staffs! It is impossible to convey any idea of the dignity of these tall, stalwart *paludiers*, as they returned home from their devotions, utterly ignoring the inquisitive strangers who had made the journey from Nantes on purpose to stare at them. The women were less imposing, less solemn, less unreal. Their dress was nevertheless piquant and coquettish—a transparent white lace cap or hood, worn over a black and white under-cap, resembling nothing so much as a plume of guinea-fowl's feathers on either side; a gay little shawl reaching to the waist, large bright-coloured apron, kilted skirts, most often of black, and leg-of-mutton sleeves. The crowd was divided into groups, who chatted cheerfully, but with a soberness befitting the occasion. The look of manly independence in

every face, the neatness and elegance of their dress, their evident piety and devotion, it was touching to behold. Guide-books give the traveller all the information he will want about the *paludiers*, and he will also find further details in a little book by E. Souvestre, 'En Bretagne,' to be had at every bookseller's shop. I will therefore only add one or two pieces of information, namely, that these *marais salants* produce 250 millions of kilogrammes (a kilogramme is two pounds and odd ounces English) yearly, but the rapid extension of salt works in the south of France greatly diminishes the importance of Bourg de Batz and Le Croisic. The *paludiers* are a hardy, laborious people, and are renowned for their hospitality. 'The pleasure of seeing you repays us,' they say to the stranger; and travellers should endeavour, under some pretext or other, to enter those poor-looking cottages, where they will find as handsomely carved wooden furniture as any in Brittany; wardrobes with carved doors and panels, sideboards, bedsteads, &c., in oak, highly varnished and polished. Formerly so rich, now so impoverished, the *paludiers* conceal their poverty, and are as proud a race as any in Brittany.

On leaving Bourg de Batz we turned off in the direction of Guérande, driving through scenery that recalled portions of Cornwall and Surrey, near Haslemere. Very little can be made of the soil, which for the most part is covered with brushwood, affording a good cover for game.

Guérande is superbly situated, and is a most picturesque, ancient, dead-alive town. It stands on high ground, commanding a wide view, and is still fortified,

having imposing gateways on either side and walls all round. Outside the fortifications is a charming walk bordered by trees, and the glimpses of the quaint old streets through the gateways, the reflection of the trees in the moat, the open country beyond, the grey walls festooned with flowers and ivy, make up a charming picture. It is so tiny a town that you can walk round it in a quarter of an hour or thereabouts.

When we arrived everybody was in church, and it was so crowded that standing room was all we could get. These devout peasant farmers and labourers were of quite a different type to the magnificent *paludiers* of Bourg de Batz, being short, thick-set, or square built. They wore the ordinary Breton dress—black jacket and trowsers, broad-brimmed felt hat, and wide flapping white collar, all clean and trim. When service was over, the crowds lingered outside to gossip, buy cakes, coffee, and fruit, and otherwise amuse themselves before going home. A quainter, more old-world town than Guérande cannot be conceived, and one wonders how modernization in any shape can reach it, seeing how entirely it is isolated from the outer world. Yet already Guérande has begun to yield to some local Haussmann, and demolition and innovation have invaded its antique solitude, and threaten to reduce it to commonplaceness.

Driving back to St. Nazaire by way of Pouliguen we had a superb view—wild, rugged moorland, interspersed with woods, pastures, and moors; beyond the smooth, glittering *marais salants*, rising stately above the picturesque towers of Bourg de Batz; beyond all, the rocky shore and the pale blue sea. The air was

fresh, and as we drove along we passed many a Calvaire, betokening the devotions of the scattered population. We could not see the *dunes*, or shifting sands of Escoublac, because it was Sunday, and the *gardien* with the keys was away; but we had a pleasant hour or two at St. Nazaire instead. About St. Nazaire, a brand new flourishing sea-port, there is nothing to say. More enterprising travellers can include Le Croisic in their excursion; but I should rather advise them to spend two or three days among the *paludiers*, sleeping at Bourg de Batz, Guérande, Le Croisic, or Escoublac, especially if their journey is made in summer-time, when the process of salt-making is going on.

A Sunday at Bourg de Batz is on no account to be omitted from the programme of journey in the Loire Inférieure; whilst Clisson, a bit of Switzerland within an hour by railway, on the Vendée line; the banks of the Erdre, described elsewhere; Vertou, where rich Nantais merchants have their country houses, and other rustic resorts can be visited in the week-time. Château Thibaut, not mentioned in guide-books, and only accessible from Vertou by hiring a carriage, is well worth seeing, and other choice spots may be found for a picnic or a day or two's walking tour—the only real way of travelling after all; though, alas! the rare privilege of the young, the fearless, and the athlete!

When the summer-time comes, Nantes naturally empties itself, rich and poor fleeing from the heat to the country or sea-side. There are dozens of favourite little watering-places within easy reach by road or rail, and those who do not avail themselves of

such opportunities have generally their own small estate or country villa, where they spend the hotter months of the year with moderate expense.

A delicious little seaside resort, now crowded and fashionable, but forty years ago a handful of fishermen's huts only, is Pornic on the Bay of Biscay. Half Italian, half Algerian in aspect, with its intense blue sea, emerald hills, and tiny white town built terrace-wise above the small enclosed port, Pornic is a place in which even the tropical heats of French summers are bearable. Here are shady walks close to the sea, little groves of silvery poplar and acacia, and long winding walks along the rocks. I recollect nothing on a small scale prettier or more gracious than this little port of Pornic; and one July evening during my stay, with a silvery crescent moon, a sky of mingled amber, pearl, rose, and deep purple, as the fairy-like little fishing-boats glided out one by one into the open sea, the scene was enchanting. Beyond Pornic eastward are smooth stretches of golden corn, reaching down to the rocky shore; and when you have got to the edge of the cliffs, you can walk for miles between purslain[1] hedges, having green hills on one side and on the other shelving brown rocks and the lake-like, captivating Southern sea.

Pornic is, as I have said, now become fashionable, and it is hardly necessary to add, dear. A small furnished villa costs 10*l.* a week during the season—*i.e.* July, August, and September—and very modest furnished rooms, without cooking and attendance, cost

[1] In French, *pourpier*, and eaten by the poor people as a salad.

seven francs a day. Hotels are cheaper, the prices being from five to six francs a day for a room and two meals a day at the more moderate. There are tiny cottages at a low price which enterprising people take, carrying bedding, linen, and many comforts with them; but at Pornic, as everywhere else, if you want comforts you must pay for them at a high price.

The glare of the July sun is terrible, in spite of the green trees and shadow-giving rocks here; but for all that Pornic is a delicious, friendly little place, with beautiful bits of luxuriant country close to the sea, and an intensity of colour in the purple sea and emerald verdure quite Italian.

The drive to Prefailles, another little sea-side resort, is very pretty; you look across softly rounded green hills on the brilliant turquoise bay, with villas and gardens peeping amid the green, and snow-white sails specking the blue. Prefailles itself is a dull brand new place, on a rocky shore, having a couple of modest hotels, two rows of bathing machines, and before each a large tent, under which people spend the hottest part of the day — the men reading newspapers, the ladies working and gossiping. We got a very good breakfast at the nearest hotel for two francs and a half, and the place looked clean and comfortable. The price charged is six francs a day for a room and two meals a day in the bathing season, and less at other times of the year. About four o'clock in the afternoon, although the heat was tremendous, bathers began to take their 'constitutional,' as I cannot help regarding these

præprandial 'promenades en mer.' Sea-bathing at Pornic, as at Les Sables, before described, is a sociable and amusing pastime. Friends, neighbours, and young people given to flirtation put on their coquettish bathing dresses, and play about in the water in company. We saw a whole family disporting themselves thus—the stout elderly papa, teaching his children to swim; mamma, portly and elderly also, enjoying the fun as well as any. All wore straw hats or gipsy bonnets tied under the chin, to protect them from the heat; and the sight of the shore, peopled by these odd mermaids and mermen, is unique and comic in the extreme. The appearance of a nereid before she enters the water is less objectionable than that after-condition of drippingness in which she quits it; but both are by no means attractive, and I am tempted to say we manage these things better in England. Sea-bathing with us is demure, perhaps dull; but it is at least decent, which cannot be said for it at Pornic or Prefailles.

In spite of the intense heat, Pornic is as crowded as it can be during the season, though there seems to be no other attraction but the aforesaid constitutional sea-walks. In September and in October it must be delightful, though I believe few visit it then. An enterprising and philanthropic Frenchwoman, the popular authoress of some admirable works of science, has lately founded a popular library at Pornic—the first effort of the kind ever heard of in these picturesque but outlandish and behindhand parts. The Pornic people have an amiable, indolent look, and would, I should say, take to innovations unkindly.

CHAPTER X.

GRAND JOUAN—A FRENCH SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE.

WHILST in England we have only one Agricultural College — the well-known Cirencester College — in France there are three: namely, that of Grignon, near Versailles; Montpellier, recently opened; and Grand Jouan, in the department of the Loire Inférieure, which I now describe. As the progress of French agriculture is of the highest importance, and these schools do undoubtedly exercise considerable influence in developing it, an account of Grand Jouan may interest many. Grand Jouan is not accessible by railway, and not without great difficulty and fatigue to be seen in a day. But the curious and leisurely traveller will be amply repaid if he follows my example, and devotes two to this pleasant excursion. At seven o'clock in the morning the little steamer plying between Nantes and Nort quitted the quay, and we were gliding between the lovely banks of the Erdre, so poetically described by Michelet in his preface to 'L'Oiseau.' The villa in which he lived, and wrote some of his most charming works, is pointed out to visitors. 'J'allai tant que terre me porta et ne m'arrêtai qu'à Nantes, non loin de la

mer, sur une colline qui voit les eaux jaunes de la Bretagne aller joindre dans la Loire les eaux grises de la Vendée. Austère comme devait être la porte de la Bretagne, ce séjour avait la luxuriante verdure du côté Vendéen.' He goes on to describe the pomegranates and magnolias in full bloom out of doors, amid which he fancied himself in the south. The banks of the Erdre reminded me of my native Orwell, between Ipswich and Harwich, and in some places of 'winding Winandermere, the river lake.' On either side are picturesque châteaux and smiling villas, standing amid gardens, with richly-wooded hills rising at the back, and emerald lawns and pastures stretching to the water's edge. Firs and pines mingle their dark foliage with birch and chestnut, oak and beech, now yellowing and purpling into autumnal splendour. Here and there are quaint little villages, at each of which we stop and drop or pick up passengers—nuns, priests, peasant folk, and sportsmen; no English or American tourist, no idler but myself.

As we approach Nort the scenery changes, and we now find ourselves in a narrow current with sedgy banks, suggestive of wild-fowl shooting, and to right and left, wide solitary stretches of marsh and moor. At Nort we alight and take the diligence to Nozay, driving at a snail's pace through an open country, with farm buildings sparsely scattered amid the waste, and a landscape made up of alternating pasture, wood, and heath, the frequent crucifixes at the roadside reminding us that we are in the most Catholic country in the world. Quitting the crazy mail-coach at Nozay, we traverse an avenue of chestnut-trees, and find our-

selves at the handsome lodge of Grand Jouan, where we are most courteously received by the sub-director and a professor. Before describing the institution it will be better to say a few words about the history of Grand Jouan. It is hardly necessary to inform the reader that the college belongs to the State. *Cela va sans dire.* Grand Jouan, therefore, is a State appendage, with a director, a sub-director, a staff of professors, house-steward, *aumônier* or chaplain, doctor, and head gardener, all chosen and paid by the Minister of Education. When we add that the students pay only forty pounds a year, for which sum they are boarded, lodged, instructed, and are further provided with medical attendance, and that at the time of writing this the number of in-students only reaches forty, it will easily be imagined that the State is a loser by the affair. The foundation of Grand Jouan is, however, due to private enterprise. Fifty years ago large tracts of the Loire Inférieure, as well as the other departments of Brittany, consisted of *Landes*, namely, waste lands, made up of heath and moor, swamp and marsh ; and though the progress of agriculture has generally changed the face of things, *Landes* still exist on a large scale in the Côtes du Nord. In 1814 the *Landes* forming the commune of Nozay, now in a state of high cultivation, were purchased by an Irishman at twenty francs the hectare (two and a half acres). They passed from his hands into those of two other proprietors respectively, who cleared about two hundred and fifty acres of the twelve hundred originally purchased. In 1830 the present director of Grand Jouan purchased the entire estate, and established an agricultural school

much upon the plan of the existing one. In conjunction with it was formed a 'Ferme École,' which may be compared to the institution of Glasnevin, near Dublin—namely, a model farm, of which the work is done by the pupils, who are thus trained for the business of shepherds, farm-bailiffs, stock-men, &c. The Ferme École was suppressed for political reasons by order of the Government in 1875, and 280 acres were in consequence withdrawn from the college, evidently a great disadvantage to the scholars. The land now farmed by the school consists of fifty acres, divided into fruit and vegetable gardens, orchards, nurseries, and a small portion devoted to pasture and farming generally. The remainder of the estate, let out to farmers and *métayers*, is nevertheless utilized by the students, who are permitted to walk about and watch the farming operations. The sub-director informed me that a considerable portion of arable land is shortly to be added to Grand Jouan itself, which will of course greatly increase its usefulness. Its objects are twofold: firstly, to form good farmers, land surveyors, and agriculturists generally; and secondly, to develop the progress of agriculture in Brittany by the introduction of the newest machinery and most improved methods; by farming high, in fact, for the benefit of outsiders—in these regions mostly small occupiers of the peasant class, who, but for the examples before them, would never come in contact with modern improvements at all. 'Lande tu as été, lande tu es, lande tu seras,' is a Breton proverb these peasant farmers would never have been able to gainsay but

for State capital and State example. I have before alluded to the testimony paid to Grand Jouan by a farmer whose farm I visited. Space permits of only the briefest possible mention of the vast and admirably kept fruit and vegetable gardens, the nurseries and plantations, the vineries and orchards I saw here. The Loire Inférieure is a land of fruit and flowers; and though we were now in the second week of October, abundant sunshine was ripening the yet ungathered crops of pears and apples, and delicious grapes were hanging on the vines. Each student has a little garden allotted to his use, where he can experiment as he pleases; and a large piece of ground has lately been laid out as an economic department, for the purpose of teaching practical botany. The school farm, as well as the outlying occupations it sublets, is well stocked, and the land farmed scientifically and well. We were conducted —always with that exquisite French politeness which welcomes the enquiring stranger, no matter of which sex or what nation—through every part of the building and farm, and could but bring away an agreeable impression. The studies of a pupil at Grand Jouan occupy two years and a half, and an entrance examination is obligatory. The subjects of the college curriculum are:—Agriculture and Arboriculture, Zoology, Chemistry and Natural Philosophy, Botany, Mechanics and Land-surveying, Book-keeping, Rural Administration and Legislation; these courses being accompanied by daily lessons of a practical nature—field work, management of agricultural tools and machinery, wine and cyder making, hemp bruising, stock

management, &c. The out-students are received for two hundred francs (8*l.*) yearly, and at the time of which I write number about thirty.

It will be seen that Grand Jouan therefore amply carries out its programme, and that it tends directly and indirectly to improve agriculture in one of the most backward districts of France. But there is another point to be mentioned. Nothing strikes the traveller through Brittany more than the apparent absence of country life, understood as we understand it. Near the large towns, villas and châteaux are scattered pretty thickly, and the better off, of even the middle ranks, have their country houses to resort to, from April till October. But in the remoter districts you may travel for hours, nay days, without seeing a country house—in other words, a gentleman's residence. The poor people have therefore none of those softening influences and salutary examples set them in England, not only by the country squire, but by the rector or vicar. Anything like an English country village with its pleasant residences, its cheerful gardens, its pretty cottages, is unknown in Brittany. English-like and charming as is the Breton landscape, nothing more un-English can be found than a Breton village, with its miry alleys, its dung-heaps before every dwelling, its bare-footed unkempt children, its general aspect of squalor and neglect. Where, indeed, should emulation and improvement come from? Without a resident gentry, without a married clergy, the Breton peasant is entirely left to his own resources, and it is hardly to be wondered at that he remains stationary. We all know what miracles an English clergyman of

tact and benevolence may effect in an out-of-the-way district, and among an ignorant population. His wife and daughters put their shoulders to the wheel, the children are tidied and sent to school, habits of cleanliness are inculcated, and sanitary advancement goes hand in hand with religious instruction. With a Catholic unmarried clergy it is not so. As long as their parishioners go to mass, and acquit themselves of their duty so far as to 'faire Pâque,' confess once a year, and pay all the various sums required of them for birth, bridal, and burial, what does a curé care if they live in filthy habitations or not? His object is simply and purely theological, and if he does not preach domestic morality and good manners from the pulpit, will he do so in the week-time? Moreover the curé, in his own person and mode of life, is not a shining light in his parish. He is generally of a dirty and neglected appearance, and woe betide the traveller whose evil fate it is to encounter him at a table d'hôte. Most likely his inability to eat and drink decently will drive you from the table, whilst you will do well to avoid his proximity in a railway carriage. Whatever other virtues he may possess, he is the last person calculated to improve his hearers in habits of cleanliness and good manners.

Now a little colony of educated people, like that of Grand Jouan, with its directors and staff of professors fixed there all the year round, must irresistibly work some good. Here at least is a lesson in cleanliness, neatness, and general propriety, which all who run may read; here at least a peasant farmer may learn how to farm, and his wife may attain to a hitherto un-

known standard of thrift and order. They have indeed constantly before their eyes, as is the case in an English village, an example, and well would it be for the prosperity and progress of Brittany if such examples could be multiplied on a small scale. If Morbihan and the Côtes du Nord, for instance, could be colonised by a few philanthropic landed proprietors bent on improving the condition of the people, the wilderness might be made to bloom like the rose, in spite of retrograde influences.

CHAPTER XI.

FRENCH BOYS AND GIRLS.

NOTHING more painfully strikes an English resident in France than the bringing up of boys and girls, as compared with that to which we are accustomed. Nothing, too, more completely accounts for the disastrous results of the recent Franco-German war, and the weakness of the social organisation therein displayed. Place an English boy under French influence and French discipline, and he would most likely turn out like the 'Jeunesse dorée' of Paris during the Empire, unable to control either his inclinations or his passions, addicted to all kinds of self-indulgence, follies and vices, and physically incapable of supporting hardship. Put an English girl in a convent school, bring her up according to French notions of propriety, and just as naturally she would turn out untrained, both in body and in mind, incapable of a higher ambition than the toilette, and in every respect a cramped, feeble specimen of her sex. Let us consider in what respect English notions differ concerning the rearing of boys from those of our neighbours on the other side of the Channel, and having done that, we will say a word or two about girls. In the first place, a *collégien*, or schoolboy, whether a boarder at a Lycée

or public school, or in a private institution, or in one of those numerous educational establishments controlled by the Jesuits, is permitted no more liberty than if he were a criminal suspected of an attempt to commit suicide. He is under perpetual supervision from morning till night. If his friends invite him out to dine, he must be fetched like a child of five years old, and sent home again; and this is the sole condition on which he is allowed to accept an invitation. I shall never forget the odd impression created by such an experience for the first time. A friend had invited two boys from a neighbouring school to spend the day—tall youths of sixteen and thirteen, and quite fit, if properly brought up, to travel alone from one end of the world to the other. No man-servant being kept in the house, it fell to the duty of the cook, a respectable middle-aged woman—I presume, had she been a giddy girl of twenty, she would have been sent all the same—to fetch the *jeunes gens*, the elder of whom, quite a young man in appearance, seemed to take such treatment as a matter of course. At eight o'clock there was a tap at the drawing-room door, and the cook again made her appearance to 'see the young gentlemen safe home,' the distance they had to go occupying just five minutes. Then as to company manners, so called, we know that English boys have none to boast of. Their animal spirits and independence of character assert themselves often in a manner distressing to their friends, but there is a reverse side to the medal. Invite a couple of French schoolboys to spend a day with you, and if strangers to the house, they behave like automatons, never

speaking unless spoken to, never stirring from their seats unless bidden, and will no more dream of walking across the room to look at a book or a picture than of flying up to the moon. Day boarders at these Lycées who live at a distance from the school are fetched and sent home in omnibuses kept for the purpose. It might fairly be presumed that a dozen youngsters placed under the care of a steady driver would reach home safely; no such confidence is placed in them; a master takes his place in the vehicle just as much a matter of course as a policeman conveying criminals in a prison van, and his eye is on his charges till they are fairly under their parents' roof. Only one day in the week, namely Thursday, is allowed for exercise outside the Lycée walls; but let it not be supposed that a walk in our sense of the word is then enjoyed. No more melancholy sight than these strings of schoolboys taking what is called recreation can be imagined. They walk in pairs with masters placed outside the file on either side; and even in the *Séminaire*, where the students are no longer boys, but young men preparing for the priesthood, the same rule is observed. Alike schoolboys and seminarists are treated precisely as if they were prisoners of the most perverted and dangerous class, ready at any moment to break away and commit some new offence.

But when the reins are loosened, and the boy finds himself a man, what is to be expected but a terrible reaction? He may still be a mere youth when freed from his shackles, in which case the danger is none the less. It is well known that French boys of sixteen and seventeen form disreputable connections,

and spend their pocket money, not in buying fishing-tackle, cricket-bats, and other things of the same kind, so delectable to English boys, but in dissipation encouraged by example and the novels of the day. Whilst, with regard to the priests, you have only to take up any newspaper containing police reports or the proceedings of a country assize, to be convinced of the crimes against domestic morality into which their unnatural bringing up and unnatural life constantly lead them. Nothing more clearly testified the rottenness of this system than the last war. Talk to the peasants who left their country home to defend this town or that; they all tell the same story, and a very sad one it is. 'Whilst the soldiers were without food, clothes, or shelter, the officers were disporting themselves in cafés and bad company' I was told again and again. The wife of a Préfet informed me that when public excitement and public enthusiasm were at their height, when tremendous efforts were being made by the really patriotic, the Préfecture had to be prepared for a certain general and his staff. But when rooms had been got ready, refreshment provided, and every provision made for their comfort, not a single officer accepted such hospitality! They were all flying hither and thither over the town in search of dissipation and pleasure: some spent the night in cafés, most in less reputable places of resort, none at the Préfecture! Since the war many efforts have been made to moralize the army. The root of the matter is the unnatural and irritating system of education. How can a schoolboy be expected to entertain esteem, much less regard, for a master who

never for a single instant trusts him, who never appeals to his manliness and sense of honour, treating him instead like a weak-minded, all but idiotic being, devoid alike of self-respect and self-denial?

But with regard to the bringing up of girls the evils are no less flagrant. A properly brought up French young lady is never allowed to walk out alone; she may not enjoy any of those healthful outdoor exercises which make English girls so fresh-looking and robust — skating, riding, driving; all these are forbidden; and, from her earliest years, her toilette makes anything like a romp impossible. The little Miss of five years old already begins to understand what fashion is, to have her frock made according to the milliner's pattern-book, to decide whether she will have pink or blue flowers for her hat, and to look down with contempt upon children less overdressed than herself. It is impossible to give any idea of the ridiculous over-dressing of French children, nay, infants, of the present day. A walk is not to be thought of without changing their clothes, even to their stockings, which must be striped if stripes are in the fashion, or open-worked if open-worked are worn. A baby of two and a half years, just able to toddle, has her little parasol in summer, her little muff in winter, her little flounces, furbelows, dress-improvers — in fine, everything like mamma, on a small scale. How is it possible for children so attired to play like others? When they are old enough to go to school they march off as demurely as if going to church, and always, no matter how short the distance, under charge of a domestic.

School-girls with us run off to school just as naturally and fearlessly as their brothers, and what harm ever came to one of the thousands of day scholars attending Bedford College, the Camden School, and other institutions for girls in the heart of London? An English girl of fifteen, properly brought up, is just as able to take care of herself as a boy of the same age, and English parents would as soon dream of sending a maid to school with the one as the other. Again, it must be taken into account that this perpetual association with servants imposed on French girls is often an influence of the worst character. The *bonne* may be willing, good-natured, and even devoted; but she is, alas! ignorant, superstitious, and often deceitful; the very last person, in fact, to be entrusted with young girls. No matter the incapacity of the *chaperone*, or the inconveniences of this perpetual *chaperonage*—fashion has imposed it, and it is submitted to. A young woman of five-and-twenty may not unfrequently be seen accompanied to church or a friend's house by a little maid half her size, hardly more than half her years; and three or four sisters, all old enough and big enough one would think to travel round the world alone, must for respectability's sake take a maid with them if they go out shopping, or merely over the way to call on a neighbour. Even an unmarried French lady verging on middle-age will take her maid—often a young maid-of-all-work—with her wherever she goes, and, morally speaking, enjoys no more liberty than a child. No wonder marriage is hailed by French girls as a release. The marriage is made by her friends, not by herself, and if it turns out ill

she is not to blame. It brings her at least freedom, which is used or abused as the case may be. But marriage is not understood in France as we understand it. The Frenchwoman is an admirable mother, or what is called a *femme d'intérieur*. She devotes herself entirely to her children; they are never out of her sight; she is nurse and nursemaid all in one; and most frequently French children are spoiled and idolized in a manner happily quite rare among ourselves. Home, in fact, means children, seldom more, to both parents. When the evening meal is over, the father betakes himself to his *cercle* or his *café*, and the mother to the nursery. There is no home, in our sense of the word. A happy union will not unfrequently be called in France *un mariage Anglais*, so unlike is it to an orthodox French marriage, made up by the parents to begin with, and from interested motives generally—in other words with reference to the all-important question of *dot*. 'How much fortune will she have?' is the first question put by a suitor to the young lady's friends; and, considering the way in which both have been brought up, perhaps this basis of union is as safe to go upon as any other. 'Falling in love,' all circumstances considered, must be an almost unheard-of phenomenon in French society.

CHAPTER XII.

EDUCATION—CLERICAL AND SECULAR.

THE traveller wandering about the suburbs and environs of Nantes will be struck with the number of the vast, many-storied buildings on either side, surrounded by prison-like walls, and surmounted by a crucifix. But for the pleasant gardens attached to them, indeed, they might be taken for prisons and reformatories, so bare and monotonous are the white-washed walls, so secluded are they from the bustling world without. North and south, east and west, look whichever way you will, these huge, unpicturesque structures meet your eye; and what is seen at Nantes is seen on a larger scale still even in some smaller towns of Brittany—St. Brieuc, for instance. What else could be expected in a Catholic country? These buildings are educational establishments held by the nuns and priests—seminaries, schools, nunneries or work-rooms, orphan asylums, refuges; and it is of the boarding or day-schools for girls of the better class that I propose to say a word or two here.

It requires very little calculation to see why, in a priest-ridden town like Nantes, the education that pays—that is to say, the education that elsewhere affords a

livelihood to hundreds of young women—should have become a monopoly in the hands of the nuns. Schoolmistresses and governesses may strive against it as they may; they are powerless in the struggle with such competitors. The few who struggle on are only just able to secure a scanty income, whilst a lady who invests her capital in an educational establishment now is sure to be ruined in the end. In the first place, there is the question of price. Since the war of 1870–71 the cost of living, as I have said, has enormously increased in the provinces as well as in Paris, and, with one or two exceptions, it is the same in a town like Nantes as in London. Servants' wages are very much lower even than in country villages with us, and house-rent is cheaper; certain provisions, too, are lower in price, such as fruit and vegetables; but the most important articles of daily consumption—meat, wine, firing, and groceries of all kinds—cost as much as in Paris and London. To realise the most modest profits, a schoolmistress must demand much higher terms than the nuns, who have no rent to pay, give their teaching for nothing, and enjoy various immunities and privileges; and, lastly, being backed by the friends of their community, can afford to increase their numbers; in other words, crush their competitors, even at a loss to themselves.

What M. Jules Simon, in his work, 'L'Ouvrière' (p. 272), affirms of manual labour, is equally true of education. The nuns can lower the price of their wares as much as they like; and while this state of things lasts, the monopoly will remain in their hands. Now, let us look at one or two prospectuses, and see

what is taught in these convent schools, and what is charged for the teaching.

I translate word for word from the prospectus of one of the largest middle-class girls' schools in Nantes:—'The subjects of instruction are—a thorough religious knowledge (l'étude approfondie de la religion), reading, writing, the French language, arithmetic, geography and cosmography, history, French literature, elementary physics, mathematics and natural history, and English by an Englishwoman.' Besides these subjects, music and drawing are taught, if necessary, and on extra payment. The charge for board, lodging, and instruction is 20*l.* a year for children over twelve years, 18*l.* for children under twelve, 2*l.* a year extra for washing, and an entrance fee of 1*l.* 10*s.*

For 20*l.* a year, then, these young ladies—and it must be borne in mind that the pupils are all of the middle ranks—are fed and taught. The food is abundant, if very simple, and the dormitories are exquisitely clean and spacious. I will now quote from another prospectus. Here the subjects taught are also 'reading, writing, arithmetic, the French language, and the epistolary style of writing and other styles'—whatever that may mean—'arithmetic, book-keeping, geography, history, and drawing, needlework, knitting, mending, wax-flower making, and embroidery.' The terms are 18*l.* a year, with 1*l.* a year extra for extras, seat in church, &c., and 2*l.* for washing. Music and English may be learned at an extra charge. Bed-linen must be furnished by the pupil.

These prospectuses may be taken as fair samples

of what is offered in the average middle-class convent school, and of the education received by far the largest portion of young French girls. For a dozen conventual institutions in Nantes, hardly one secular school can be counted, and several instances were brought under my notice of enterprising women who had been ruined in their attempt to compete with them.

Certainly parents satisfied with such a curriculum must be unambitious indeed. They may be quite sure those notions of cosmography are very elementary, whilst the best instructed nun going, by virtue of her calling, is compelled to teach history backwards, and to send forth her pupil with a mind as full of errors as it is possible for that of a human being to be. Music and English, then, are considered enough by way of accomplishments; and considering how rare it is to find a French girl able to speak or even read English, we cannot suppose the English taught in convents is anything but of the most rudimentary kind, whilst in Germany, every school-girl can speak English, and every fairly-educated German lady knows our literature as well as her own. I never yet met a young French lady who had read an English book in English, and only one Frenchwoman (she had never entered a convent in her life) able to speak English perfectly. Of course I am not speaking of Paris, where highly educated women are to be found as plentifully as in London, but of provincial towns; and I must say that nothing so much surprised me in a large, rich, enterprising city like Nantes, as the lack of anything worthy the name of instruction to be found among

the younger women. Quite a revolution has been effected in England within the last twenty years, but the kindred movement affecting the education of girls and women in France has been much slower. There can be no doubt that the nuns, keenly alive as they are to the interests of their body, will take the initiative when necessary; and I heard only the other day, that they had begun to send up teachers to the examination for the governess's diploma, who for the few days spent in the examination room put aside their conventual dress; but this is quite an innovation. No mention of the diploma is necessary in the convent's prospectus, and till lately, all that a teacher needed was a *lettre d'obédience*, so called, from the head of her order. A nun so provided could pretend to teach anything she liked, just as a nun, similarly certificated, can bleed, draw teeth, purge and poison, in country places, without ever having gone through a course of medical studies. The medical nuns, as I have said, who give their services gratuitously, starve the country doctors, whose charges, Heaven knows, are low enough; but whilst they are permitted to practise, the peasant folks will go to them rather than pay the doctor, just as the better-off will entrust their children to a nun, *diplomée* or non-*diplomée*, and ask no questions, as long as she teaches for next to nothing. When something worthy the name of education is demanded of convent schools, depend on it they will give it. Their history and cosmography will change wonderfully, if necessary, and even the world will be admitted to have existed more than six thousand years if such an admission will bring grist to the convent mill.

2.—SECULAR.

It is a relief to turn from the convents to an effort by a noble Frenchwoman on behalf of her sex. Other services in the cause of female education and advancement will be mentioned later, but the most important step in this direction is that taken by the founders of the *Société Nantaise pour l'Enseignement Professionnel des jeunes filles.* In the brief biographical sketch given elsewhere of that true patriot and high-minded Nantais of our own day, the late Dr. Guépin, I mention the paramount importance attached by him to the physical and intellectual training of women, as evidenced in his unfinished romance, 'Marie de Beauval.' Dr. Guépin fortunately found in his wife, not only the warmest sympathy, but the most indefatigable co-operation, and it is owing to Madame Guépin's public spirit and devotion that her husband's schemes have been carried out.

In 1869, at the time of the general elections, when Dr. Guépin was chosen as candidate by the Nantais electors, a public subscription was opened for the purpose of defraying all expenses. This sum, amounting to 3,000 francs, Dr. Guépin declared, in a circular addressed to his supporters, should be devoted to educational purposes. A few philanthropic workers were got together, a committee formed, subscriptions and donations flowed in, the Municipal Council supported the scheme, and in April 1873 the *Société Nantaise* opened its gratuitous courses to young girls of all ranks. The following extract from

the programme will show how varied is the instruction offered—in all cases, be it remembered, by teachers who possess their diplomas, or by university professors, the entire classes being under the direction of a distinguished lady teacher, long engaged in teaching French language and literature, and prepared for the same by having taken her first and second diplomas.[1]

The instruction offered is of two kinds—technical and literary; and special classes are held for students preparing for the *examens des brevets de capacité*, which may be compared to our junior and senior Local Examinations, and without which no teacher in France (outside a convent) can pursue his calling. A word or two more about these examinations later; but let us now study the programme. The general classes embrace elementary subjects, such as history, arithmetic, geography, &c. The advanced, for elder students, embraces higher arithmetic and mathematics, book-keeping, physiology, harmony and solfeggio, chemistry, physiology, botany, &c.; English, drawing from the model and linear, and courses of history—the teaching in all cases, be it remembered, being given by trained professors of tested ability. The technical instruction is not only of a kind that all women of the middle classes require, but such as to enable those who require it to gain a livelihood, and consists of painting on porcelain, designing for tapestry, carpets, &c., painting on silk, dress-making, lace-mending, and other kinds of needlework; engraving on wood is to be added later, and doubtless the scheme will be greatly deve-

[1] English girls can enjoy these privileges.

loped in the future. It is difficult to decide whether the technical or literary instruction is the most useful, and certainly both are appreciated. Here you see young girls of various ranks seated side by side, and a pleasanter sight cannot be imagined than the young eager faces bent over their work. The courses adapted for elder students for preparing for their second examination are naturally attended by fewer numbers; but these will increase as the scheme becomes more widely known. There are no fees except for the higher courses and to foreigners; and such liberality is just as acceptable to the ill-paid professional man as to the *employé* or small shopkeeper. The economy and necessity for economy in French middle-class households spoken of elsewhere makes it easy to understand what an inestimable boon is such an institution as that of the *Société Nantaise*. It affords exactly the instruction needed to those who cannot afford to pay for it, and otherwise would not be able to obtain it. All honour to its public-spirited founder and foundress, and may their example be followed in every town throughout France!

Now for a word about the *brevets de capacité* exacted of all teachers—out of the convents—and which I have just said may, roughly speaking, be said to take the place of our junior and senior middle-class examinations. The *bachelier ès lettres et ès sciences* examination, answering with some variations to our B.A. examination, may be taken up later, and two or three instances of young ladies passing one or both brilliantly, came under my notice whilst in France. But the *brevets de capacité* meet the wants of teachers,

and within certain limits leave nothing to be desired. The junior students are examined in elementary subjects, such as French composition, arithmetic, French and Scripture history, catechism, in writing and *viva voce*, and also in needlework. A girl who fails in the latter, which may consist either of mending, darning, marking, button-hole making, &c., is at once rejected. The senior students are examined by writing in three obligatory and one optional set of subjects; the obligatory consisting of arithmetic, mathematics, linear drawing, general history, geography, and free-hand drawing; the optional being a modern language—English, German, or Italian. They are examined orally in elementary science, hygiene, singing, book-keeping, especial prominence being given, both in the written and oral examination, to French history. The advantages of this scheme are obvious. There can be no doubt whatever that a French governess provided with her two diplomas is more fitted to teach her own language and literature than an average English one who has passed her junior and senior local examinations, though she has not that smattering of many things which, in the case of our own students, may develop into a much wider and more comprehensive education. Still, provided that the period of learning ends with the second certificate or diploma, there can be no doubt that much is to be said for the narrow limits of the French examination scheme. If we should know anything at all, it is surely the history and literature of our own country, and when that is obtained, the foundation is laid for other things.

Whilst on the subject of the education of women, it is worth while mentioning the free instruction of an elementary kind offered to working men and women by the *Société Polytechnique de Nantes*, founded by the town a few years ago. These free classes answer to our night schools, and are held during the winter months, prizes being awarded to the successful students at the close of the session. Reading and writing, it must be remembered, are by no means as yet the portion of every French subject, and in Nantes the stranger's eyes may yet fall upon such an announcement as this: 'Écrivain publique: 10 centimes per lettre.' Women servants who can read, much more write, are the exceptions, not the rule, in these parts; and this, the most Catholic part of France, is, as might be expected, the most ignorant. But these free schools, so generously set on foot by the municipal council of Nantes, are doing much; and a pleasanter sight I never remember than that of the prize distribution presided over by the mayor, when hundreds of prizes were awarded to servant-maids, laundresses, tailoresses, soldiers, working carpenters, grocers' assistants, &c. It did one's heart good to see with what pride the blushing *lauréat* was received by his friends, and also to see the patience with which the mayor, the General of division, the professors, and authorities civil and military, patiently sat out the long performance in unusually warm weather. The proceedings were enlivened with music; and the students could but feel that, whether successful or no, their hungering after knowledge was sympathised with in high quarters. It is hardly necessary to add that a *fête* of

this kind took place on a Sunday, when those for whom it was given could attend. Nor is it hardly necessary to add that those who took a leading part in it were Protestants. Amusement is all very well on a Sunday; but when amusement has anything to do with secular instruction and progress, clericalism can look aghast on a Sunday *fête* as well as the most ardent Sabbatarian going!

CHAPTER XIII.

I.—SCENES OF CONVENT LIFE.

'TAKING the veil' is a ceremony so rarely witnessed by outsiders, and so connected in people's minds with 'Delphine' and other romances of a past epoch, that a short account of what really takes place on such occasions by an eye-witness will not fail to interest some readers. Even the evidence of one's senses hardly suffices to bring home the reality of a spectacle so at variance with modern thought. By seven o'clock on a bright spring morning, then, we found ourselves seated with about fifty other spectators—friends of the novice—in the private chapel belonging to the cloistered sisterhood whose vows she was about to take. Divided from the little chapel by an iron screen on our left, was a second, in which the sisters sit on Sundays, and in which the ceremony was partly to take place, the officiating priests remaining in the first in front of the spectators, the novice with her fellow nuns remaining in the inner one. Thus, except for a small aperture large enough to admit the head and shoulders, everything that went on in the second chapel had to be seen through the iron trellis-work, which but added lugubriousness to a spectacle as lugubrious as the human mind could well invent. By

and by the bell tolls, and a nun lights the tapers on the altar, the parents and immediate friends of the novice take the seats assigned them close to the opening in the grate, the men on one side, the women on the other; the inner chapel fills with nuns, the huge black veil reaching to the knees being all that is seen of their costume, as they move about holding lighted tapers and chanting in a sepulchral voice. Then a young girl dressed in bridal white comes forward and kneels before the opening, and the unearthly ceremony begins. As it occupied two hours and, excepting the latter part, was unusually monotonous, I will hasten to the sermon and the mass. After a preliminary service, one of the officiating priests places himself exactly opposite the kneeling figure of the nun and delivers the customary sermon on the hollowness of the world she is about to forsake, and the beauty and delight of a life within the convent walls. It was not a pleasant sermon to listen to, containing as it did, amongst other unbecoming things, a good deal of flattery strangely out of place in the mouth of a minister of religion. 'For you, my dear sister,' he said, 'I have no fear. You have been reared by your parents the angel of purity that you are. We feel that you are one of the chosen, who have felt within you the call to dedicate yourself to heavenly contemplation, and live apart from the corruption of the world.' And in fact, judging from the tenor of the priest's discourse, we might suppose that we were living in the dark ages, when the *Trêve de Dieu* and other palliatives were invented for the protection of feeble humanity. It would seem from his dissertation on

the subject of chastity—which was unusually long—that it is just as difficult for a woman to keep herself pure in these days as when innocence and beauty had no other protectors but stray knight-errants, and when the convent walls really did offer a refuge to the weaker sex. But we all know that this is changed now, and that the state of things suggested by his sermon is wholly visionary and untrue. 'My dear sister,' he said, 'you are about to take upon yourself the vows of perpetual chastity! to prove to mankind that there is such a thing as heavenly purity in the world. Oh! that rare and wonderful virtue! Think of what it is to keep your body unpolluted;' —and so on, and so on, the words making us feel as if, indeed, we were living eight hundred years ago, when uncurbed human nature went about as a wild beast seeking whom it might devour. Then the sacrament is administered, and the three vows—namely of purity, obedience, and chastity—taken, the novice with tears and trembling repeating the accustomed formulas. The death-bell tolls, and an interval occurs, during which she is led out, her hair is cut short, and she puts on the black veil, the symbol of her life-long incarceration. But the ghastliest part of the ceremony is yet to come. On her return a bier covered with a funeral pall is laid out, on which she reclines while the service for the dead is chanted over her, the nuns moving about with lighted tapers, and the priests joining in the chant. How long this lasted I cannot tell, but it would be difficult to picture a more weird and unearthly spectacle. The parents sobbed, the spectators looked on sadly; no one was

unmoved except the priests, who sat by grim and calm, and joined in the death chants mechanically. At last one of them approached the aperture, and inclining his head towards the apparently lifeless figure stretched on the bier, says, 'Levez-vous, ma sœur;' whereupon the singing ceases, the girl rises, the bier and pall are removed, and with monotonous movements and singing the procession forms, having the new made sister in the midst, and the nuns all bearing lighted tapers, retire slowly through the entrance by which they had come.

Another ceremony I saw of the same kind had much more éclat about it, the novice belonging to a rich family. It was publicly announced in the *Semaine Religieuse*, and long before it was to take place, crowds of fashionably-dressed people came flocking to the chapel of La Visitation. As I sat awaiting the service, a sweet-looking nun came up to me and whispered, 'Would you like to see her?' I at once followed my guide to a room in the convent where about thirty people—ladies, gentlemen, and children—were gathered eagerly round a small iron grating in one side. At last a curtain behind the grating was drawn back, and we saw a girl of about five-and-twenty dressed in orange wreath, bridal veil, and white dress, who began taking leave of her friends. The scene was a sorrowful and ghastly one,—the white-gloved little hand held tremblingly through the bars to clasp that of relatives, schoolfellows, or friends, the white face, the quivering lips, the dark-robed figure of the sentinel sister was standing by. The girl spoke in an unnatural voice, and it was evident had nerved

herself up to speak cheerfully, and to appear cheerful; but it was a horrible mockery, and while she smiled, those who were taking their leave wept for the most part bitterly. When her parents came the crowd passed into the chapel, and the usual service took place.

A friend of mine calling one day on a lady of his acquaintance, found her busy making her daughter's wedding-dress. But the wedding-dress was to be worn on the day of consignment to a living tomb, not to the happy, natural, and heaven-sent duties of wife and mother!

From that day to her death this young girl of twenty-five is as much lost to her parents and friends as if indeed they had followed her to a real and not to a fictitious grave. When sickness and age overtake them, it is not her arm that will support their tottering limbs; not her voice that will cheer their last years. Not for her the joys of wifehood and motherhood, the care of orphaned nephews and nieces, the joys of out-of-door life in spring, the busy streets, the multifarious duties, cares, and rewards of an active, healthy, natural human existence. Shut within the four walls of the convent till her dying day, her life at best is made up of morbid introspection, of puerile duties and petty obligations, disturbed by self-consciousness, and varied only by occasional fits of despondency and hallucination. What might be expected of so unnatural a system takes place; but the psychological aspect of convent life can only be touched on here. Sufficient to say that at the last congress of the French Association

for the Advancement of Science a learned physician of Paris showed by facts and figures the enormous preponderance of consumption in cloistered convents. 'It is not unusual,' he said, 'for a young girl in splendid health to fall a victim to the sedentary, self-centred existence imposed upon her within two years after her entrance.' Dr. Maudsley, in his admirable work on 'The Physiology of the Mind,' comes to the same conclusion, though common-sense hardly needs the help of scientific deductions in such cases. We all know that if you place a human being in abnormal circumstances, abnormal diseases and sins will be the result, and that cloistered convents seem to have aimed at as complete an abnegation of humanity as it is possible to conceive of. There is an order in which the sisters are so far dead to the world that when one of them has lost a parent only a general announcement is made, such as—My sisters, one of you has had the misfortune to lose a mother, or a father, as the case may be. None know, and none may ask, the name of the deceased; so that there is universal mourning, and all hearts are made desolate instead of one. In this order the nuns wear no linen, but woollen garments next their skin, and never sleep in beds, only reclining on boards placed slantingly on the floor; they do not touch meat, except in illness, and it is to be hoped that their miserable and useless lives are soon brought to an end by the various mortifications they impose on themselves.

But the 'taking of the veil' is over at last, and gladly we exchange the gloomy chapel for the open air. In the little court outside the officiating priests

are bowing benignly to the friends and relatives of the newly-made nun; another dowry has been added to the revenues of the Church, another soul rescued from the perils of instruction and the corruptions of enlightenment;—from their point of view the transaction is satisfactory enough! We hasten out into the streets, where the early sunshine of this bright spring morning is making the birds sing and the trees burst into flower; children are hastening to school, young housekeepers to market; there is life and bustle and cheerfulness everywhere directly we quit the prison walls of the convent. Oh time! Oh manners! how little have you done for us when such things are permitted in a civilized, nay more, a Christian country! We shudder as we read of the Roman vestals buried alive, or the Hindoo widow sacrificing herself on the pile; but what are these transient tortures to the life-long entombments encouraged and sanctified in our own day by so-called ministers of religion?

II.—THE COST OF A FRENCH TROUSSEAU.

France, as everyone knows, is pre-eminently the land of fine linen. From a child's pinafore to a cardinal's surplice, every article of wearing apparel that linen can be turned into is there made the object of the greatest care and elaboration; and few Englishwomen quit French territory without purchasing choice specimens of French *lingerie*. To understand the enormous labour bestowed upon that portion of female dress, it is necessary to see a trousseau in

hand; and to see this you must enter a convent. Nothing is easier. The heads of religious houses are only too happy to admit strangers into their *ouvroirs* or workrooms, attached, as are orphanages, to almost all; in the first place, because they are proud of the exquisite needlework achieved by their pupils, and, secondly, because, from a business point of view, it is highly desirable that the world—*i.e.* the wealthy world—should know where to go for its trousseaux when its daughters are married. A marriage outfit is a costly affair among rich circles, and it is only likely that in a Catholic country all work of this kind, when accomplished within the convent walls, should be paid for handsomely. Thus, at the appointed time, when the work comes home without a single long stitch, every garment as perfect as needlework can make it, the bride weeps for joy, the parents are charmed, and compliments pass all round. And now let us enter the workroom; and in describing one we describe a dozen, each as nearly as possible resembling the other. We enter, then, a spacious, airy, whitewashed room, having a crucifix over the mantelpiece and religious mottoes painted on the walls. It has large windows on each side, and seldom anything in the shape of a curtain to keep off the dazzling light of mid-day summer. Sitting on high benches without backs are twenty, thirty, or fifty girls, as the case may be, of all ages from four to twenty-one, busily plying their needles. At each end of the room presides a sister, often over a sewing-machine, and her quaint nun's garb is the only break in the prevailing monotony—a large, bare, over-lighted room, rows of

little children in white night-caps, blue-checked dresses, and white aprons, who stitch away silently, automatically, as the bright summer hours pass by. As we enter all rise, and remain standing whilst we inspect their work. The sister takes us from one little needlewoman to another, proudly exhibiting the stitching or embroidery she has in hand. Then finished garments are produced, and we gaze in wonder, first at the elaborate piece of needlework, and then at the feeble-looking workers who have produced it. In one instance a gentleman and a little girl were with me, when the comic and the pathetic were combined; the nun, with childish simplicity, offering for his inspection articles of female apparel generally supposed mysterious to the other sex; whilst it was touching to see the wistful look of those orphan children—children, did we say?—of those living machines, at the happy little girl who had for five minutes quitted the world of sport and sunshine and flowers for their dreary prison. These orphans are waifs and strays, collected from Paris and the neighbourhood, in most cases the nameless offspring of dissolute fathers and betrayed, despairing, or perhaps equally dissolute mothers; and, inspecting them narrowly, it was easy to see by their weak eyes, narrow chests, and stooping shoulders, how much this unnatural life was telling upon physiques already but too predisposed to sickness and debility. Some had intelligent faces—one was even observed to smile—but for the most part they looked dull, sickly, and apathetic; and no wonder. The toil to which they are condemned from the time they enter the convent

till they quit it at the age of twenty-one is of the most monotonous and mechanical description. The same girl stitches, and gathers, and makes button-holes all day long. No training is given her of a kind to fit her for service or domestic life in general; and if her eyes are good for anything after so many years of microscopic stitching in early youth, she does not know how to use them otherwise. An instance of the kind of training—physical, mental, and social—afforded in these *ouvroirs*, came under my own notice. The young woman in question, when she first quitted the convent to enter domestic service elsewhere, was untrustworthy, deceitful, and incapable. If wine were to be got at, she would drink till she became incapable; if eatables were left out unlocked, she would be always at them; she could not help picking and stealing at every opportunity, and lied without motive. Her stupidity was even more striking. If you gave her stockings to mend or seams to sew, she would do it well, but she could not cut out the simplest garment; she broke everything she handled. She had suffered so much, and had been made such a machine of, that it was impossible to teach her either good habits or ordinary household matters. Alike her moral sense and her intellect were dulled past awakening. And the worst is not ended here. Privations of all kinds, and chiefly the sedentary occupation to which they are condemned, ruin what little health these poor children may bring with them to the convent; they leave it consumptive, sickly, often deformed, always feeble, and utterly ignorant of everything but the use of their needle.

And, again, there is another evil side to these convent *ouvroirs*, and the topic is so important, and is so often brought forward in French newspapers, that it is worth while considering it carefully. As may easily be imagined, the needlework executed in convents is done at the smallest possible cost. The children's labour costs so little that the nuns can afford to undersell the needlework executed elsewhere to almost any extent. M. Jules Simon, in his interesting work 'L'Ouvrière,' shows that the competition is crushing. Out of one hundred dozen shirts or shifts sold in Paris, eighty dozen are produced in the convents. The nuns help their pupils; and, as M. Simon points out, they for the most part would not be seamstresses if they were living in the world, and unsupported by the revenues of the convents. Their time counting for nothing, and the rules of their order obliging them to live simply, they can thus lower the wages of workwomen as much as they please. 'For,' says M. Simon, 'the needlewoman must live by her wages; and when her employers barter the price of her work, it is in reality her existence that is being bargained for; every centime she abates implies some new privation, and naturally there is a certain lowering of price which she cannot accept.' This was written in 1862, but the circumstances remain materially the same. Take an example that was mentioned to me by the wife of a Préfet during the late war. The wives of artisans and workmen called to serve were literally starving, and whilst the soldiers wanted shirts, the women wanted nothing so much as the making of them, in other words,

bread for their children. Large orders for soldiers' shirts were sent, and the poor women were crying with joy at the thought of the work in store for them, when lo! the convents step in, and offer to do it at a much lower price. Money was scarce, and so the convents get the work! This is but one instance out of many, to show how cruelly oppressive is the competition spoken of so eloquently by M. Jules Simon. Is it any wonder that the number of orphans and orphanages increase? Under a form of benevolence this system drives the needlewoman to desperate courses, and in fact causes the very overflow of population it supports. Whilst the convents undersell the needlewoman, she will resort to vice rather than starve, and M. Jules Simon shows how very near starvation is the condition of the average seamstress in Paris and large towns. It is precisely the same thing as we have seen with regard to schoolmistresses and governesses; and in some country places, as we have said, with doctors. A young medical man, who settles down in his native town after having pursued the necessary studies in Paris, is sure to find these female competitors in the field. With a 'lettre d'obédience,' from the head of her order, a nun feels herself quite at liberty to practise medicine; and though doubtless she makes blunders sometimes, the poor people will go to her—in the first place, because she is handy; and in the second, because she charges no money fee. Nuns are said to be particularly expert in drawing teeth, and as long as they exercised their skill on themselves and their neighbours, the priests —for wherever you find a convent you find a monas-

tery over the way—no one could find fault; but it is certainly unfair that an experienced doctor, who has been at the cost and labour of a thorough medical training, should be starved by these meek-looking quacks, who carry a lancet and pair of forceps about with them as naturally as a rosary.

So much, therefore, for the convents. On the one hand we find a set of women giving themselves up to contemplation and prayer—in other words, to a life of utter uselessness, self-centredness, and morbid, unwholesome egoism. On the other—that is to say, in the non-cloistered convents—we find them, under a pretext of benevolence and Christian charity, taking the bread from the working-woman's mouth and driving her into those courses which more than anything else fill their orphanages and reformatories. We find them enriching their communities by the toil and life-blood of little children, glorifying the Church at the expense of the feeble and the helpless. We find them steadily monopolizing education, crushing the independent efforts of lay-women, no matter how efficient, every year increasing their buildings, adding chapels, giving signs of increased wealth and prosperity. What is all this but to lay the hand upon the sorest place in the organization of French social life? Whilst the women are educated in convents, in other words, brought up to regard their confessor as the depositor of their secret thoughts before father, mother, and husband; brought up to feel that truth is nothing, and family life is nothing, and wifely duty nothing—but the Church, that is to say, the priest, above all—is it any wonder that the position of

French women is so deplorable, and the standard of domestic life so low? Can we expect our sons and daughters to grow up virtuous if they are taught to deceive us from their earliest years? Can we look for love and trust in that home where the confessor stands before the husband in the wife's confidences, and the husband's sins against honour and manly virtue are condoned by a gift to the Church?

'Madame,' said a Vicaire-Général to a French-woman of my acquaintance, who refused to give money towards the expenses of a religious procession on the plea that her husband objected; 'Madame, it is not at all necessary to tell your husband. You can give what you please.'

'M. le Vicaire,' said the lady, 'I have been married for thirty years, and have never yet deceived my husband; I am too old to begin now.'

'But, Madame, when you do it for good works!'

'No, M. le Vicaire, I cannot do it; and besides, I have another reason. The law forbids a religious procession passing a place of worship devoted to another faith. Your procession, therefore, is forbidden to pass our street by the law.'

'The law, Madame! What does the law matter to us? As if we paid any heed to the law!'

The priest stuck to his text, the lady to hers, and he left her in high dudgeon. Teach a woman to rob her husband, break the laws, do anything you please, so long as you go to confession and acquit yourself generously to the Church! Such is the teaching of these so-called ministers of religion!

Take the following as an illustration of the much

vaunted charity of conventual institutions. Two wanderers, whether beggars or not I do not know, but pedestrians they certainly were, in the last extremities of hunger, knocked at a convent gate, asking bread. The laws of the convent only allow food to be distributed at a certain hour, and the hour was passed, so the door was shut upon the starving creatures, who, finding their forces fail them, lay down at the gate, awaiting the dole of bread promised on the morrow. When the morning came and the door opened, they were dead!

'Never shall I forget that night to my dying day,' said the superior of the convent to my friend. But, doubtless, if starving vagrants demanded bread out of the prescribed hours next day, they would be left in the road to die as before.

Of course there are many well-intentioned women who have devoted themselves to the religious calling; but no one who lives long enough in a Catholic country can fail to be struck with two things—in the first place, the unnaturalness of the conventual system, and its inappropriateness to an advanced state of civilization; and secondly, the enormous evil worked by good intentions when not backed by an ardent spirit of truth and an unsectarian love of humanity.

It seems to me that George Sand, better than any other French writer, has realised the truth as regards the conventual system. At any rate I know of no passage to be compared in wisdom and insight to the following, which I extract from one of her novels, 'Mademoiselle la Quintinie.' She is speaking of convents and convent schools:—

'Eh bien, c'est là précisément que j'ai perdu le goût de cette maternité banale qui n'est pas celle que Dieu inspire directement à la femme. D'abord ces établissements ne peuvent se soutenir qu'à l'aide de spéculations et de calculs dont le côté matériel me répugne, et puis ils sont bien plus institués pour l'esprit du parti du dehors, que par l'esprit de charité du dedans. L'hostilité déclarée ardente, sans cesse en mouvement, de cette lutte contre le siècle a quelque chose qui m'effraye et me consterne. Eh bien, j'ai su des intrigues véritables pour faire tomber ces établissements séculaires, pour tuer toute concurrence, pour accaparer et monopoliser le bénéfice d'un commerce, car cela est devenu un commerce du temps. L'état religieux est devenu généralement lui-même un métier pour vivre, et l'esprit de corps n'est qu'un esprit d'égoïsme un peu moins étroit, mais beaucoup plus âpre que l'égoïsme individuel. Je ne sais pas comment les choses se passent ailleurs, mais aujourd'hui, en France, je les ai vues telles qu'elles sont, et elles ne sont pas à la gloire de Dieu. J'ai voulu savoir si c'était seulement la corruption de l'idéal dans certaines communautés, j'ai été mise dans la confidence et dans l'esprit de l'ordre, et j'ai vu le même esprit de lucre et de domination poussé et soutenu par un esprit de conspiration, je ne dirai pas contre tel et tel gouvernement, mais contre toute espèce d'institutions ayant pour base la liberté. . . . . Non, Dieu n'est pas là! et cela devait arriver. L'état de renoncement est un état sublime qui doit rester exceptionnel, pauvre. Du moment qu'il s'affecte, qu'il tourne en prosélytisme calculé et intéressé, du moment

qu'il se recrute avec aussi peu de choix et de scrupule que s'il ne s'agissait pas de servir d'exemple, du moment qu'il se répand dans toutes les affaires de ce monde, et qu'il se mêle de tous les courants vulgaires, de ses intrigues puériles, il n'est plus le premier, mais le dernier des états, car il trafique des choses les plus sacrées, la foi et le renoncement.'

You might search French literature through without finding a parallel to this incomparable passage.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME ASPECTS OF FRENCH SOCIAL LIFE.

NOTHING strikes an English resident in France more than the way in which politics and political passions are mixed up with every incident of daily life. We are Liberals and Conservatives as the case may be, and sometimes choose our tradespeople accordingly; but as a rule, most of us live to the end of our days without even once getting into a fever-heat about politics at all. Here it is quite the contrary. A French baby sucks in political excitement with its mother's milk, and schoolboys give each other black eyes, not about contested cricket-bats and fishing-lines, but about Napoleon IV. and Gambetta, M. Thiers and M. Buffet. In England, whatever difficulties a hostess may encounter do not arise from the political differences of her guests; she may be embarrassed by nice social distinctions, even theological, scientific, or artistic antipathies; but it would never occur to her to place A at one end of the table and B at the other, lest they should quarrel about Gladstone or Disraeli. In France, we must remember that this happy state of things cannot possibly be expected to exist. Where revolutions are of such frequent occurrence, and where political parties are so numerous, it

is only natural that we should find French society divided into so many hostile camps—the Republicans, the Legitimists, the Orleanists, the so-called *Cléricaux*, the Bonapartists — each party hating, distrusting, and I am sorry to say, reviling the other, and each losing no opportunity of displaying such feelings that may come in the way. To understand all this you must stay in a French town during a general election. For weeks beforehand all is expectation, excitement, and what can only be conveyed by the French word 'exaltation,'—for weeks afterwards, all is bitterness, vituperation, disappointment. It happened that during the last general election at Nantes the working man's candidate, a Republican—by his opponents called a Red, a Communist, and everything else alarming—was nominated, in opposition to the wishes of the moderate Republicans—represented by the bourgeoisie and the professional class, who went over to the other side and voted for a Legitimist! Now all this seems to us incomprehensible. Here was, as one would think, the very man to represent Republican interests, a man moreover of honourable position and reputation for 'mœurs'; in other words, a respectable father of a family, a man who had never shown any evidence of his Socialistic principles; yet all those who should have supported him went over to the other side. And why? Simply because the working classes, more logical and more persistent, voted as a man for the only Republican candidate who came forward. But what followed after was more incomprehensible still. Disappointed Republicans—who had voted, be it remembered, on the clerical side—took to their beds out of

sheer chagrin! Fathers, mothers, and children were laid up really ill, and all from pure mortification, excitement, and temper. The Legitimist nobility and the rich merchant class were so frightened, that they began hiding away plate and treasure as they had done during the Prussian occupation, and preparing themselves for a sudden flight; the anti-Republican papers were rabid, predicting a Socialist Revolution, and evils untold that were to fall upon all; the priests ran hither and thither, asking for advice and consolation, and dreading nothing less than a general massacre. The Capuchin monks did not dare to show themselves in the streets for fear of being murdered like the unfortunate Dominicans in the Rue d'Arcueil, and each had provided a suit of civilian's clothes in case of need; in fact, so perturbed, enraged, and unlike itself, was the peaceful city of Nantes, that life was insupportable.

A lady of my acquaintance receiving afternoon visits just then was shaking hands with the wife of a Bonapartist, when the wife of a Republican was announced. The latter beat a hasty retreat, even refusing to sit down. Another friend encountered an acquaintance on the stairs—she was stout, elderly, and not given to hasty movements. 'Mon Dieu, Madame,' she said with great alarm; 'is it true that we shall have a Socialist rising here, and all be murdered in our beds?' A priest called on one of the foreign consuls in a great state of trepidation, and talked of the Commune and the massacre in the Rue d'Arcueil as things likely to be repeated; the poor man was really frightened out of his wits. And out of this

mountain, thundering as if it would vomit forth fire enough to destroy the world, crept out the quietest little mouse that ever was seen! In other words, after a few weeks of terror and apprehension, nothing came of the new candidature except a project affecting the compulsory military service or *voluntariat.*

There is another subject on which calm discussion is as little to be expected in ordinary society as that of politics—namely, the Prussian occupation, Germany, the Germans, and everything that is German. This is only natural. The war with Prussia was rather the fault of the government than of the nation; and the bitterness of the ordeal all classes went through can only be realised by those who live among them and learn it for themselves. To all appearances every wound is healed and the tremendous war indemnity has left the prosperity of the country unshaken; but broken hearts, and ruined hopes and households scattered for ever, are not so easily forgotten. No one can more sincerely admire the German nation than I do, but I admire the French also; and the spectacle of a people rising after misfortune upon misfortune in the way that France has done since the crushing events of 1870-71 is surely unique in history. I should say that the system of plunder as carried on by the Prussians is unique also, and it is hardly to be wondered at that the very name should be held in detestation. French lightheartedness, economy, and courage have repaired the damage done by the ravagers, have re-filled the ransacked wine-cellar, have put new time-pieces and chimney ornaments in the place of those packed up by the

Prussian officers and dispatched to Germany. But how can they forget these things? How can they help comparing the conduct of the conquerors with that of their ancestors, thus graphically described by Cæsar? 'Latrocinia nullam habent infamiam quæ extra fines cujusque civitatis fiunt, atque ea juventutis exercendæ ac desidiæ minuendæ causas fieri prædicant.' War is one thing, plunder another; and certainly the Germans showed themselves masters of both arts, though French ingenuity sometimes baulked them of their booty. How often did these heroes walk over potato-beds or flower-gardens, unconscious as babes unborn of the good wine buried underneath! How often did they quit a house, leaving it as dirty as a pigstye, wholly innocent of the elegant clocks and other tempting things hidden in secret cupboards! There is no denying the things imputed to them. No one can say that even Imperial France offered a more contemptible spectacle than that of a Prussian officer, starred and decorated, on his knees before a packing-case, filling it carefully with clocks, china and other knicknacks, for his wife or his sweetheart. These heroic Uhlans were not what an Irishman would call 'dirty particular.' If they could not get elegant little time-pieces, they would lay hands upon some lesser prey—ladies' worked handkerchiefs, silk stockings, anything that came handy. Certainly if the great campaign of 1870-71 is to be described briefly, it should be thus: 'The Campaign of Clocks.' When the wives of superior officers accompanied their husbands, they showed themselves equally anxious to take home souvenirs of 'La Belle France,' breaking open wardrobes and clothes-presses, and quietly stowing

away in their trunks the linen and toilettes of the unfortunate ladies who had left them behind.

Germany, therefore, and the Germans, is a topic on no account to be broached in ordinary French society; neither politics generally; so that there is no wonder conversation lags at evening parties in the provinces. As a rule, ladies' teas and talks are very dull indeed. Frenchwomen—I am, of course, speaking of society in the provinces—hardly read at all. They know nothing of English literature, except Walter Scott, and perhaps Miss Braddon's novels, of course, in translation, and devote their time to the toilette and domestic duties rather than to books or intellectual employments generally. It is not to be wondered at that an amount of gossip, small talk, or downright ill-natured scandal, goes on, when two or three ladies meet together. What else can they talk about? Their husbands regard politics as unfeminine. Custom has forbidden them the occupations and amusements which relieve the tedium of the most monotonous domestic life with us; the convent has taught them to regard science and knowledge with abhorrence. The law treats them like children and minors always. Respect for opinion forbids them to read, or to appear to read, the most popular French novels. They are of necessity reduced to gossip, or to be silent as Trappists. You never see books in fashionable drawing-rooms, not a sign of such a thing; the men read at their clubs, the women never read at all, so books are never bought. It is amazing how much more is spent on cookery in France, and how much less on literature. Buying a book never enters

into any one's head, and the lady who reads a newspaper in a country town must be an 'esprit fort' indeed! We English people are shocked at the license of conversation allowed in mixed society in France, and our French neighbours rail at us in consequence, and taunt us with a squeamish use of the word 'shocking.' But of one thing I am sure; and that is, if certain forms of vice and evil do exist with us as commonly as in France, it is in the interests of morality to prevent them from becoming ordinary matters of conversation. It is amazing what subjects are allowed to form matters of daily talk in France, and the way in which young people are allowed to listen and to take part in conversation is quite unknown with us. Take, for instance, discussions on theological questions, or on the leading political characters of the day. Nothing is held sacred from criticism and suspicion. Alike religious belief and national traditions are allowed to be trampled under foot, not only in the presence of young people, but by boy politicians themselves. The veteran leaders of political parties, men who have grown grey in the service of their country, are no more safe from this cynicism than the young and ardent defenders of the Republic. Nothing strikes me as a more melancholy or more hopeless fact than this attitude of irreverence. The average young Frenchman grows up believing in neither religion, nor the State, nor morality. His mind is steeped in disbelief and mistrust from his earliest years. The only thing, perhaps, in which he really believes with a religious belief is family life; he loves his mother, later on he adores his children, and family

life is certainly something. But we English, who are certainly brought up with a respect for our country, its legislation, its laws, and its traditions, if not for anything else, cannot enter into the feelings of the typical Frenchman, believing in none of these things. Of course there are not wanting ardent patriotic souls who are free from this intellectual vice; but, alas! such men are rare, and they are the first to become the victims of calumny and detraction. As it is, one wonders how patriotism, even of the intensest, strongest kind, can withstand such persecution; and how any men are found like M. Gambetta, M. Waddington, and others, to remain at their posts at all. Read the principal French newspapers daily for a year, and you will leave them with a very fair idea of what I mean, though it is chiefly in living among French people and on French soil that the state of things is best realised.

With regard to religion, the condition of affairs is much like that we see in Germany: the women crowd the churches, and the men stay at home. But in Germany we do not, fortunately, find the confessional. George Sand, in one of her most interesting novels I have just quoted from—'Mademoiselle la Quintinie'—in a few forcible sentences has, better than anyone else, indicated the incalculable contradictoriness of this system:—'La nature est sainte,' she writes, 'ses lois sont la plus belle manifestation que Dieu nous ait donné de son existence, de sa sagesse, et de sa bonté. Les prêtres les méconnaissent forcément. Le jour où l'Eglise a condamné ses lévites au célibat, elle a créé dans l'humanité un ordre des passions étranges,

maladives, impossibles à satisfaire, impossibles à tolérer, souvent difficiles à comprendre, appétites de crime, de vice, et de folie, qui ne sont que la déviation de l'instinct le plus légitime et le plus nécessaire. Et par une monstrueuse inconséquence, en même temps que les conciles décrétaient la mort physique et morale du prêtre, ils lui livraient les plus secrètes intimités du cœur des femmes, ils maintenaient la confession.'

The truth could not be better put than in these few lines of the greatest of French novelists; and any Englishwoman who has lived on terms of intimacy with Frenchwomen, devout Catholics, or who at one time of their lives were so, will understand why it is that the priest in France is regarded not as the friend, but the enemy of the family and the home. Supposing that I were at liberty to repeat, and supposing that the statements were fit to repeat, that were made to me by French friends of my own sex concerning their experiences in the confessional, the hair of my readers would be made to stand on end. What wonder that works against the system are prohibited, and that, although sold and read all the same, are done so *sub rosâ*? Yet never was a Luther so needed as in nineteenth-century France; and were such a one to arise, able to destroy the confessional, there might be some hope for her as a nation yet.

The common sense of even the uneducated rebels against it, as the following story will show. I was travelling one day from Nantes to Rennes in the ladies' compartment, with a respectable tradeswoman, who was married and at the head of a house of business. We fell into conversation, and, without being

led on to criticize the priests, she made the following speech: 'I am a good Catholic, and I always perform the duties enjoined on me as such; but I do feel, as a wife and as a mother, that it is against nature to have an unmarried clergy. What do our priests know about the difficulties we have with our children? How, not being a husband and a father himself, can he enter into our feelings? I am bidden to go to him and tell him secrets even before my husband. Is this natural, or Christianlike, or right? No; I wish we had a married clergy as you have in your Protestant England, and then confessional might be a good thing and a consolation.' And this woman was not the only instance I met with of ordinary untrained common sense, breaking unaided through the chain of custom and superstition; only, as a rule, people are afraid to speak out.

Some writers impute the excesses of the Commune—nay, the Commune itself—to the deep-rooted infidelity of the French people, and I append at the end of this chapter a most interesting extract from the parliamentary enquiry on the insurrection of the 18th of March, upon this subject. I cannot concur with the opinions therein enounced; yet the whole report is well worthy of attention. Doubtless want of faith may partly account alike for the crimes and errors of the masses, as well as for the culpable apathy of the bourgeoisie; but there were other and weightier causes that brought about that little-understood movement, known to us as the Commune. Its history is yet to be written; and when it finds a conscientious and capable historian, we shall most likely come to a very

different decision—not, perhaps, regarding the leaders, so much as the multitudes that followed them.

The careful observer of French life will find a certain kind of respect for the opinions of others, which we do not possess in anything like the same degree. Everyone will tell you that eccentricity in France is rare, and the explanation is to be found in the exaggerated sensitiveness to what cannot be called by any other name than gossip. Women especially live under a scrutiny that can quite satisfactorily account for their eagerness to rush into the marriage state—a state which, if it gives nothing else, does at least give a shadow of freedom. But freedom, as we understand it, is not understood by our neighbours. It is wonderful to what inconvenience French people will put themselves, rather than do anything that might appear odd in the eyes of their acquaintances. A young lady, for instance, who is invited to spend some time with friends—say in the Pyrenees—is obliged to wait till some one turns up going the same way, before the time can be fixed for her journey; and if an eligible chaperone never turns up at all, she has to stay at home. Of course, no one of the other sex, unless her grown-up brother or her father, would be considered a proper person; and in country towns to so great a pitch is this scrupulousness carried that an unmarried lady, even if no longer young, who has been dining out, could not allow herself to be escorted half a mile home by her hostess's husband! In England, were we sending a sixteen-year old daughter to school, could we for a moment hesitate to entrust her, say to an undergraduate of our acquaint-

ance going the same way, to the village curate, or in fact to any one kindly offering himself? A young French girl—who may be said never to travel at all—would not be allowed to make a journey with one of her father's friends were he double her age; and the idea of entrusting a school-girl to the charge of a school-boy—as is so often done with us—why, the town of Nantes would go mad at the very notion of such a thing!

The consequence of this absurd system of treating man as the natural enemy, instead of the protector of woman, has very injurious results. As a rule, Frenchwomen stay at home all their lives, and cannot therefore eradicate the vices of their education by experience and observation. This narrow life—to which, indeed, men are addicted almost as much as the other sex—of course accounts for the uncompromising nature of the French character. Travelling cures us of all kinds of inconvenient hobbies and habits; but as our neighbours do not travel, they retain theirs with a wonderful persistence. I have heard grave and sensible French people say that they could not possibly travel in England, because they should get no *bouillon* there, and would have to eat vegetables cooked in water! So they stay at home; and doubtless, if they had not stayed at home so tenaciously for half a century, they would have been better prepared for the German war, which, by the way, they always call an invasion, though it is an historical fact that it was in the beginning a French invasion of German territory.

Seeing what a delicious land and what an easy

pleasant life they enjoy—for, putting the working-classes out of the question, no one gets more *agrémments* out of existence than do our neighbours—it is hardly astonishing that they are so unwilling to quit their homes. Nowhere else do you find so much of what the Germans express by *gemüthlich*. Everybody and everything is friendly, gracious, and agreeable. The servants and the tradespeople treat you *en amis*; you find no moroseness, melancholy, or *malaise* anywhere. Daily existence is made as light-hearted and amusing as circumstances will permit, low spirits and care are short-lived, and English spleen unknown. Even the nuns have a perpetual smile on their faces, which is doubtless in a great measure accounted for by the spacious gardens in which they take their recreation, and the brightness of the sunshine they enjoy the greater part of the year. It is difficult, in comparing France to England, to over-rate the effects of climate upon temperament and character. It is not only the climate, but the soil of France, that gladdens the heart and fills the mind with a joyous realization of Nature's strength. The fruits of the earth are here produced in such abundance that rich and poor may alike enjoy them. That depressing sense of contrasted wealth and poverty, that weighs on the spirits in England, is wholly absent.

The comparative equalization of material and social well-being seems to me the great and consolatory fact in French social life. The priceless heritage of the Revolution, added to the extraordinary natural advantages, have here formed such a combination as we find nowhere else under the sun. In America, all

men are equal in the eyes of the law, and every man may bequeath the land he has toiled upon and enriched to his children. But America does not possess that glorious climate and those natural advantages which have ever maintained for France a first place among European nations; nor does any other country possess that gay, gracious, and indescribable, abundantly-gifted character which renders the French people the most brilliant, fascinating, and delightful in the world.

There is one point, however, in which England and America are far in advance of our neighbours. The Frenchwoman is still by force of law, custom, and opinion, the inferior of man—legally a minor and a domestic slave. When she becomes a widow, the division of property takes place down to the minutest particulars; even a little furniture must be divided by the notary among her children, herself retaining a small portion. The wife, the mother, the widow, is nothing in the eyes of the law, the children everything. As a Frenchwoman once wittily observed to me: 'We have no enjoyment of our property till we are in our graves!'—in other words, whilst it is held by the husband and administered as if the wife was a perpetual minor, she may, supposing she has no children, will it as she pleases. If a rich man, a widower having children, marries a portionless wife and dies without a will, the law does not give her a farthing. If a woman marries under what is called 'La communauté des biens,' the earnings of the husband are divided with her during her lifetime, and on the death of either wife or husband the partnership—

for it is nothing else—is dissolved. The widow takes away the portion that she brought, and the husband's property is divided among the children, a small portion being allotted to her by law. The children are always set before the wife or mother by law, which bears hardly alike upon rich and poor. Then in case of small farms or businesses of any kind, on the death of the head of the house, the wife's share is so small that in many cases she has to turn out in old age to earn her living. The sons and daughters are taught by law and custom to regard themselves proprietors on their father's death, and it is very rare indeed that they do not carry out the law to the uttermost. In England we are accustomed to see tenant farms managed by widows till their death, the sons seeking their fortune elsewhere. The goodwill of shops also, and other business concerns, are usually left to the wife by her husband, the children never dreaming of supplanting her. In France it is not so. The husband dead, the wife is—not certainly obliged to burn herself on his tomb—but unless well provided for by a fortune of her own, must take care of herself as she can.[1] The children are first and last, the widow nothing, in the cruel eyes of the French law. The Code Napoléon—framed by a hater of women—has never yet been modified so as to alter a state of things the first Napoleon found desirable.

One of the most curious phenomena of the nineteenth century French mind is the love of funeral discourses. Whenever a notoriety dies—or, as in the case

[1] The Michelet law-suit fresh in our memories is an instance of the hardness of the French law on widows.

of the late Madame Louis Blanc, the near relative of a notoriety—the occasion is seized for such a gathering together of individuals, and such an outburst of popular feeling, as are permitted on no other. The funeral oration, indeed, may be looked upon as a safety-valve letting off those ebullitions of sentiment on politics, social affairs, and religion, which must otherwise effervesce in some more violent and dangerous form. Any reader of French newspapers will recall a dozen recent instances. Within the last twelve months the deaths of many more or less eminent personages have called forth eloquent discourses from Victor Hugo and other less known but effective orators, and have brought together thousands of eager listeners, to whom no other opportunity of hearing a discourse is permitted. The interment of Madame Louis Blanc may be called a political demonstration pure and simple; also that of Esquiros, the well-known writer, exiled by the Imperial Government for his opinions; whilst many others must occur to the memory of any one who watches French affairs with interest; and to those foreigners living in France an opportunity of witnessing these ceremonies is of constant occurrence. The author of 'Rabagas' has a happy hit at this national love of speechifying over open graves. One of his characters, I forget which, whose wife is being interred, when every one else had done speaking, steps forward and declared 'that neither in this world nor the next will he ever again behold the face of the beloved partner of his existence;' at which declaration of faith every one was profoundly touched. There may be something in the apparently fanciful conclusion of some

writers, namely, that the passion for funerals and funeral speeches is a remnant of the ancient Celtic spirit, which clung tenaciously to all things concerned with death and the grave. The Gaul familiarised himself with the idea of death to that degree that he feared it no longer, and regarded immortality so certain as to incur debts—'to be paid in the future life.' The nation that 'feared not death' might well be regarded with terror, even by the Romans; and the direct descendants of those men who very nearly drove Cæsar from Gaul—the Bretons—love to frequent churchyards, place the skulls of their fathers within sight, set out feasts for the departed on certain days of the year, and sit by their tombs, 'because the dead do not like to be left alone in the grave.' Certain it is that no other highly advanced people find funeral ceremonies so attractive, and nowhere but in France are they made the excuse for political speeches. The love of excitement inherent in the French character is here brought out. Our neighbours like to be *émotionné*, to be made to lament and weep, to be lifted into the region of alternate exaltation and despair; whilst to ourselves nothing could be more repulsive than to have to eulogize our friends over their newly-made grave. It must be taken into consideration that on the whole the tendency is healthy. Nothing could be more depressing than the sight of a grand liberty-loving, heroic people so completely silenced as not to be permitted to say generally a few impassioned words at the open grave of some beloved friend or admired teacher. Even the iron rule of the so-called Republic dare not meddle with expressions

of feeling which are for the most part occasioned by profound grief, unselfish devotion, or the glorification of noble, moral, social, and intellectual qualities.

NOTE.

IN the Report of the Commission of Inquiry[1] charged by the Assemblée Nationale with an investigation of the causes that led to the Commune, occurs a striking and melancholy passage on the atheism prevailing in France. We think it best to give a mere literal translation of almost the entire extract, as no mere digest could convey any idea of its sincerity and almost solemn impressiveness. The writer, M. Delpit, member of the Assembly, begins by quoting that well-known passage of Sallust, in which the historian deplores the rise of the Catiline conspiracy amid the peace and opulence of Republican Rome. Then, indeed, he writes, the Roman people seemed worthy of compassion; they had subdued their enemies from east to west, they enjoyed the goods that men most esteem, namely, repose and wealth; yet even at that time arose citizens who deliberately planned the destruction of the State and of themselves. It always happens that those who have nothing envy honest citizens and exalt dishonest ones; hating all that is old, and craving only what is new, they seek to destroy existing institutions, and having nothing to

[1] Enquête Parlementaire sur l'Insurrection du 18 Mars. Paris: Libraire Législative, 1872.

lose, delight in spreading anarchy and sedition. The same characteristic stamped the insurrection of March, and the speaker goes on to investigate the causes of a moral and intellectual depravity, so at variance with the so-called progress of the age. Why is it, he asks, that the cynical fanaticism of those who aimed at overthrowing society was met by such an apathy and want of resolution among those who desired nothing but the general good? This is the question, and to answer it, is to indicate the causes of the disorder lately witnessed. What have become of our religious and political beliefs? Whence come that contempt of the past, and that disdain of social traditions, which seem more and more to stamp us as a nation? Whence that feebleness of character, that defiance of law and authority, that immediate desire of material well-being, so common among us? A Socialist writer, Pierre Leroux, already so far back as 1831, answers us, and in an imaginary dialogue between Man and the spectre of Society makes the former thus bewail his fate:—'Since there is now nothing left to mortals on earth but material goods, gold and dross, give me then my share.' 'Your share is already allotted,' answers Society. 'But I find it an unfair one,' answers Man. 'You were formerly content,' replies the spectre. 'Formerly,' Man answers with scorn; 'but then there was a God in Heaven, a Paradise to strive after, a Hell to fear. If I were inferior by virtue of social position, I was every man's equal in the eyes of the Church. I submitted in order to be rewarded, I suffered for the sake of eternal felicity. Then I had prayers, sacraments, pardon and repentance.

Now, I have lost all these. There is no longer a Paradise, no longer a Church. You have taught me to discredit Christianity. Whether, indeed, a God exists, or no, I cannot say; but this I do know, that those who make laws do not believe in Him, and make laws in the spirit of unbelievers. Give me, then, my portion of gold and dross, which is all you have left us. Of what use to talk of masters and superiors when you have proclaimed the equality of all? I have, therefore, no master; and since there are no longer kings or priests, I am in my own person king and priest, and society is but made up of the like egotism.' And then, as if foreseeing the Commune, the philosopher describes a vision—'I hear a deadly tumult of those who contend in civil war, tearing each other to pieces. A pale, trembling spectre appears, crying, "I am Society. I bid each of you to return to his place." The multitudes answer "You say that you are Society; render justice to us. We suffer whilst others enjoy. Let us also enjoy, or tell us why we suffer." The spectre is silent. Then seeing that Society is indeed a phantom, unable to keep them, the combatants resume their arms, reiterating, "Down with those who oppress us! Why do not the poor occupy the places of the rich? Why are there any inferiors? Why are there any poor?"'

This allegory, rhapsodical though it may appear, gathers strange force from the circumstances under which it was narrated; and M. Delpit makes no apology either for the lengthy citation from a Socialist writer, or the long and melancholy reflections that follow it. He goes on to demonstrate to the

Assembly how deeply rooted and pernicious have been the effects of this growing atheism on his countrymen. The great victory of the Revolution was the establishment of equality before the law; but legal and social equality are essentially different things, and the latter is inconsistent with reason and the nature of things. Society, therefore, is not possible without moral authority, and moral authority cannot be conceived and maintained without the sanction of divine authority. The insurrection of March is an instance of brute force predominating, and shows the part played by Proudhon and other teachers of his school in bringing about the mental condition that made it possible. To deprive a people of its faith, to surrender it to its passions, to subject it to brute force—what is this but to hasten the social cataclysms and the reign of anarchy they foresaw and described with so much picturesqueness and power?[1] 'Those,' says Leibnitz, 'who believe themselves freed from the fear of an ever-watchful Providence, and a possible dread future, let loose the bridle of their passions, and give their mind to the corruption and evil example of others. If they are ambitious and of a forcible character, they are capable of setting fire to the four quarters of the globe.' The hatred of Christianity — we are confining ourselves to the opinions of M. Delpit—has been all along the misfortune of the French Revolution, and the enemy of true progress. The hatred of Christianity, and the propagation of materialistic ideas under the Second Empire, count for much in

[1] See Proudhon's *Contradictions Politiques* for a true prophecy of the *Révolution Sociale* he did not live to see.

the recent insurrection, and the onslaught made upon society by the International. Indifferentism and negation have penetrated every layer of society, especially the working classes, where they have played the worst havoc of all, from want of counteracting influences, such as culture, good habits, rectitude of mind, and patriotism.

And now for the causes of such a retrogression. These are, primarily, the defects in the system of our material education, the tendencies of the periodical press, of literature generally, and of theatres, public meetings, and especially those of the Red Republicans. There has been, in fact, a general combination against all kinds of religious belief; and this prevailing decay of faith has been mainly instrumental in bringing about our recent shortcomings as a nation, our moral defalcations, our feebleness before the enemy, our apathy during the civil war. Twenty years of despotism have further debased us, physically and morally, as the German war proved. Men failed in their duty in every grade of life. What was left to us but to fall back upon the survivors of another epoch, whose incontestable superiority was our last resource?

Science has also contributed to the general demoralization. Whilst the leading men of science have confined themselves to the study of facts, deducting from every fresh accession of knowledge theories which they are ready to yield, if necessary, to those based upon wider demonstration, superficial enquirers have wisely proclaimed their materialistic philosophy to the multitude, imposing upon the young, the ignorant, and the feeble-minded.

Never has this pernicious doctrine been more openly professed, alike by the press, literature generally, by public orators, and even by professed teachers of youth. Not only has such an influence been active in higher education, but also in the elementary and secondary schools. We must insist upon the fact because it is true. In a Christian age, the pagan maxim has been forgotten—'Maxima debetur puero reverentia.' The men of the Empire entrusted with public education forgot De Tocqueville's recommendation—that those who teach materialism should be regarded as the natural enemies of the State.[1] Education is the vital principle, not only of civilization, but of public morals; if education sinks to a low ebb, all sinks; and with us, it is not only this that has lost ground, but the faith of generations. A few have worked to educate the people without religion; this is but to make way for a nation without liberty. All that is taken away from the worship of the ideal, and rendered to the worship of materialism, profits the cause of despotism. Instruction alone will not raise the moral tone of a nation; if it is purely literary or scientific, it will not necessarily give virtue or courage. The Communists are a sad instance in point. They were men of education, more or less. True courage is inspired by pure and lofty beliefs; the looking forward to annihilation will never produce a real hero. Let us leave our

[1] 'Under the Imperial Government,' says a préfet in a report addressed to the Commission of Enquiry, 'religion and belief have been held up to contempt. The governing classes and the public authorities have lost all respect; the standard of higher instruction has been lowered; whilst the press, the tribune, the theatre, the spread of luxury, corrupted people's minds, and elementary teaching was vitiated by the politic agitations and atheistical influence of the teachers.'

soldiers the faith of their fathers, and you will find them worthy of their ancestors on the battle-field. General Trochu, in his work on the French army, wrote in 1867: 'The soldier needs the inspiration of religious duty and sacrifices. It is then that he marches calmly and nobly to meet his death; only he who believes in a future life is serene.' M. Thiers also wrote: 'A nation of believers is more inspired to undertake great enterprises, and more heroic when called upon to defend its greatness.'

To secularise (déchristianiser) the schools is to lower the moral standard of the nation, and here we call the philosophers to bear witness that pure philosophy has taken no hold except on men of cultivated minds and of leisure, and that the narrow garden of Academe would still be large enough for the disciples of Plato. Frederick the Great recognised this fact when he based public education on Christian ethics, rather than on the dogmas of philosophy. It was not from his convivial companions, but from the clergy, that he asked rules and systems; and if we in France wish to make our citizens men capable of loving and defending their country, we also must take care that the education of the people is a social and a conservative force, and not a power for evil. It was after the Seven Years' War that Frederick the Second drew up the code of primary instruction. After Jena, when the Prussian nation was almost blotted out of the map of Europe, far-sighted statesmen saw that they could only raise the nation by strengthening religious conviction. 'We are agreed,' wrote Stein, 'that the whole people must be imbued with a spirit of morality,

religion, and patriotism. Do not let us delude ourselves; there is nothing more anti-Christian than the prevailing Socialist theories, and all who would fain preserve society but go astray in pulling down religious belief.' 'If Christianity were more powerful,' wrote M. Guizot, 'Communism and Socialism would soon be mere obscure follies.' France must remain Christian if the relations of the wealthy and working classes are to be strengthened and fundamentally changed for the better. Religious associations and charitable institutions must combat the moral and material sufferings which are the lot of humanity, and which it is easier for Socialistic teaching to increase than to suppress. The religion of humanity created the irresistible movement of 1789. Men believed in an indefinite progress of the human mind, and Condorcet, in his work on the subject, was but the interpreter of popular feeling. Faith and hope in God almost disappeared, and faith and hope in humanity were put in their place. It was an illusion, as experience soon showed, though full proof was wanting till the Commune took place eighty years after the Revolution. What a satire upon human presumption! Was it then that social reformers appealed to human perfectibility? Did they not see that in depriving men of their sublimest hopes, they degraded them to the level of the brute creation? Not to speak of our material losses, our confiscated money, territory, and our humiliating defeat, what a spectacle is that of our moral decay! No reaction against crime, a public indifferent or accomplice, whilst Paris was given up to fire and sword!

In the class hatred that now divides France, it is chiefly the Christian religion and its ministers that are the butt of popular hatred. This is not the place to defend the French clergy. History replies to the calumnies heaped upon them. But from a political point of view it is your duty to show the danger existing from such a feeling. You who are occupied with the future of France, you who would fain, by the progress of education, the diffusion of moral influence, hinder a recurrence of those deeds which have disgraced us in the eyes of Europe,[1] to you it belongs to defend and encourage the highest moral, social, and intellectual training ever bestowed on men. You have to deal, writes the illustrious Protestant before quoted, with enormous masses of human beings at the mercy of charlatans and demagogues, at the mercy of their own passions and impulses. Shall our only mediators be the gendarme, the schoolmaster, and the professor? You have in the midst of these multitudes men whose sole mission and occupation it is to direct others in their belief, to console them in their misfortunes, to teach them their duties, and inspire them with hope. The time is passed when religious liberty can be a cause of fear. Leave it intact to the people, and let it expand in all its greatness.

It is from the wealthier and cultivated classes that the example of religious incredulity has emanated; it is from them that must come the example of a return to faith, and a healthy frame of mind. The *libres penseurs* have proposed to regenerate

[1] It must be remembered that this was spoken before the Assembly.

society by positivism. Let us cite the morality of the Gospel and the code of Christianity. The spread of education; the progress of science, literature, and art; the press; the rapid means of communication; our civil and political liberty; all these are but one-half of civilisation, and their influence is only healthful if counter-balanced by religion, authority, and reverence. This opinion is shared by all the leading statesmen of England and the United States of America. We repeat, all the Socialists in the world have not succeeded in discovering a rule of conduct and a curb upon passions which would enable men to live without God, without religion, and without morality.

What we have to restore in our country is moral force. Materialism will not bestow it; we must seek it in spiritual ideas. At the present time there can be but one political course—namely, to save, regenerate, and resuscitate France. On this head religion and philosophy speak the same language, and we cannot do better than here quote the words of the most eloquent contemporary philosopher.[1] 'Have nothing to do,' wrote M. Cousin, 'with that melancholy philosophy which proclaims atheism and materialism as the new theories destined to regenerate the world. They destroy, but they do not create. Do not listen to those superficial minds who give themselves out as profound thinkers, because they have discovered difficulties in the Christian religion, after Voltaire. Measure your progress in philosophy by that of the veneration you feel for the religion of

[1] *Du Beau, du Vrai, du Bien.*

the Gospel. Be persuaded that in France democracy will go beyond liberty, leading to disorder and dictatorship. Ask, then, reasonable liberty only, and attach yourself to it with all the forces of your soul. Do not bend your knee to fortune, but accustom yourself to bow to the law. Nourish within you the noble feeling of reverence. Know how to admire. Possess the worship of great men and great things. Reject that enervating literature, coarse or refined, as the case may be, that delights in pourtraying and in flattering the passions of human nature, which appeals to the senses and the imagination rather than the soul. Guard yourself from the malady of your age, that fatal craving for ease and comfort which is incompatible with every generous ambition. *Sursum corda, voilà toute la philosophie.* We would add *voilà toute la politique.* Here alone is our safeguard against anarchy and despotism; here is the motive power to raise our country in rank and importance; here is the guide that will lead us to our own place. We are essentially a nation strong by virtue of thought and ideas; let us leave our enemies the worship of brute force and the aberrations of atheism. The sceptre of the world, thank God, does not belong to the sword nor to the scalpel, but to intellect and righteousness, and we may be enabled to regain it!'

Thus closes that part of the Report dealing with religious questions only. Whilst far from agreeing with the writer, we give it as well worth the consideration of all those who are anxious to get a clear notion of French thought and feeling. Every page of this Blue-Book on the Commune is full of interest.

CHAPTER XV.

A FRENCH SCIENCE CONGRESS.

THE first thing I saw on arriving at Nantes, in August 1875, to take part in the meeting of the French Association for the Advancement of Science, was the following programme:

'Fêtes in Nantes from August 19 to 26:—19: Arrival of the military bands from Rennes. Official reception of the French Association. Concert by the Philharmonic Society of Nantes. Regatta on the Loire. Concert given by the firemen of Nantes. *Punch* offered to the members of the Congress. Illuminations, music, fireworks. *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* at the Grand Theatre. 20: Concerts, theatrical representations. 21: Concerts, &c. 22, Sunday: Great musical festival. Arrival of thirteen amateur musical societies of the Loire-Inférieure and Maine-et-Loire. Procession through the town with banners. Concerts in both theatres at 1 P.M.; in the evening, grand illumination of the Jardin des Plantes; selections from *Judas Maccabæus*; fireworks. 23: Concert in the Gardens of Le Sport (club), &c. 24: Gratuitous representation of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* by the company of the Odéon. Concert of the Quartette Society of Nantes, &c. 25: Grand Venetian fête on

the Erdre; fireworks, concerts. 26: Pigeon-matches, horse-races, balloon ascent. Close of the Congress of the French Association for the Advancement of Science.'

This was pretty well for one week; and when it is considered that return tickets were issued from Paris at less than half the usual fare in honour of the occasion, thus bringing hundreds of pleasure-seekers to Nantes, it is no wonder that, what with those who had come for enjoyment, those who had come for instruction, and also those who had come to minister to both, by the time the Congress opened there was hardly a bed to be had in the place for love or money. 'The hotels are turned topsy-turvy for the *savants;* even the attics are full,' said the landlady of one hotel to me. And though I was three days in advance of the crowd, I had come too late to obtain admittance. What was to be done? 'Les savants, les savants,' everyone said, with a deprecatory shake of the head; 'there is nothing to be had till the *savants* have taken their departure!' In despair I was inclined to give up the Congress altogether, and return to the quiet, beautiful little city of Angers I had just quitted so reluctantly, and where twenty rooms could be had for the asking. But a friend came to the rescue, and found me a refuge in one of those suburban little lanes where, even in hot, dusty, commercial Nantes, you can enjoy the quiet and rusticity of the country. My hostess—a widow lady, living with her children—had a room to spare, and was willing to give it up to a friend's friend for a time. So amid flower-beds, fruit-trees, vines, tame pigeons, and other domesticities,

I settled down in the Passage St. Yves to watch the Congress. My room was charming; and placed conspicuously over the portico of the opposite villa was the life-size statue of St. Yves, evidently the patron saint of the inmates. I am obliged to confess, however, that St. Yves is not quite what a guardian angel should be; for during the war of 1870-1871, when the Prussians were within a day's march of Nantes, and it was feared that such a symbol of Catholicism might arouse the wrath of Protestant ravagers, the saint was hoisted down by ropes and pulleys, and safely stowed away till all danger was over. Similar treatment befell the statue of a Virgin in the same street, so that we must presume the faith placed in such guardianship to be limited, and dependent on circumstances. It is the same with St. Anne, the saint in whom all good Bretons believe. St. Anne, the peasant folks say, grants all the prayers of the pious; and to see the hundreds of miniature wax legs, arms, heads, hands, and hearts, besides discarded crutches, hung up as ex-votos before her shrine in the cathedral, you might suppose this to be true, and that she had indeed miraculously taken the doctor's place. But, fortunately for the latter, it is not so. St. Anne helps him to work the cure; she does not herself usurp his functions.

No sooner does the stranger set foot in Brittany than he is reminded that it is the most Catholic part of France. As you speed along by railway from St. Malo to Nantes, you are startled by the occasional glimpse of a large crucifix, in stone or wood, as the case may be, placed conspicuously by the wayside.

Those gaunt life-size figures of the crucified Christ, sometimes rude and grotesque, at others possessing some claims to artistic design, thus placed have a pathos of their own. The third-class passengers, consisting chiefly of market women in the various head-dresses of their district, priests, and soldiers, cross themselves at the sight, and gaze upon the figures reverently. There can be no doubt that for the country folks, such symbols do mean something, and that, mingled with much superstition, Brittany is still pre-eminently the land of faith and piety.

Excepting peasant-life, there is little of the picturesque element to be found in Nantes. The beautiful mediæval architecture that still delights the traveller at Angers has all but disappeared, and instead of the narrow streets with overhanging roofs, the quaint dormers filled with flowers, the stately palaces of Angevine city magnates 300 years ago, all here is new, commonplace, and devoid of beauty. There is, however, much life in these handsome streets and squares, and at night, when the quays are lighted, and all the population turns out for its evening promenade, the spectacle is animated enough; but the lover of fine old buildings or the picturesque in domestic architecture must go farther afield. On the other hand, the good looks of the peasant folks are quite striking, and there is a dignity about their bearing which, combined with the simplicity of their costume, gives them a character of their own. It must not be supposed, however, that the women wearing every imaginable kind of head-dress all belong to the poorer classes. For the most part they are well dressed, and there are many

districts of Brittany in which the wives and mothers of small proprietors who have enriched themselves still adhere to the national coiffe. This may be of the richest lace, and the other day I heard of a story in point. At a seaside town, not far from Nantes, a ball was given in aid of the sufferers by the recent inundations. When the guests had assembled, and the mayor and lady mayoress arrived to open the ball, the latter appeared wearing the high-pointed head-dress of the province. She was richly dressed in silk, and her young daughter wore the latest of Parisian toilettes; but there was the mother in the garb of her ancestors! The cap was said to be made of lace worth 15*l.*

Thus much for the surroundings, therefore, of the *savants*, the curious, and the pleasure-seekers who for the first time found themselves in Nantes. A spacious, crowded, handsome city, all must admit; a city, moreover, in which creature comforts are to be obtained, but certainly devoid of the romantic and the antique.

How the Nantes of to-day is changed in these respects from the Nantes of former days authors and artists tell us. We have only to select one volume from the valuable collection of works on Brittany contained in the public library to be convinced of this—'Histoire de Nantes, par le Docteur Guépin; avec dessins de M. Hawke. Nantes, 1839.' Dr. Guépin's work is doubly interesting. His *collaborateur*, Mr. Hawke, an Englishman—facile and pleasing artist, but incorrect draughtsman—has embellished Dr. Guépin's learned and interesting work with eighty-five drawings on wood, many of which give an admirable idea

of the picturesque buildings so characteristic in former days of the *métropole bretonne*. In historic interest, however, Nantes has few rivals in France. An obstinate character marked it from the early times. Our Edward III. besieged it in vain, and when Jean de Montfort, triumphant over his enemies in the province, and proclaimed Duke of Brittany, made an alliance with the English, the Nantais refused to open their gates. 'Le duc, oui,' they said; 'mais non les Anglais.' Nantes was one of the first cities to embrace the cause of the Revolution, and none was so ill requited. The Reign of Terror inaugurated by Carrier is one of the darkest chapters in French history. Capital of the most Catholic and aristocratic province of France, Nantes has always fostered a strong democratic element. In 1830 it rebelled against Charles X. Barricades were raised, and an encounter took place between the citizens and the troops. From that time until the banquet given in honour of Gambetta, two years ago, in spite of the enormous majority against it, Republicanism has held ground. To understand the statistical Catholicism of the place, you have only to pass from the crowded cathedral and churches on Sunday into the Protestant church, where you find the preacher discoursing to empty benches. Three or four hundred Protestants in a population of 118,517 is a small minority indeed; and to understand the effect of this you have only to talk with Protestant housekeepers on the difficulty of procuring servants. 'The best servants,' said a lady to me, 'will not go into a Protestant family, much less into a family who go to no place of worship on Sunday,

who are known to be *libres penseurs*, in fact. Can it be wondered at? A good Catholic tells her confessor everything, and he would not permit it. The Protestants have still to put up with a great deal in France.'

Thus, then, in Nantes society you have very heterogeneous elements: the Breton aristocracy, who congregate around the cathedral, who keep very much to themselves, and who want Henri Cinq; the rich mercantile class, who, for the most part, are Catholics too, and who affect the luxury and elegance of Paris; the professional class, among whom you find a sprinkling of Republicans, Protestants, and men and women of real education and enlightenment; lastly, there are the working classes, who are Catholics for the most part.

As might have been expected, except by the two latter classes of Nantais, very little interest was manifested in the meeting of the French Association for the Advancement of Science. The rich mercantile folks, in fact, were all away at Le Croisic, Lorient, Pornic, and other sea-side resorts; the aristocracy were away in their country houses. Those who remained to receive the members of the Congress were chiefly of the upper middle class, and those who crowded the hotels from the 19th to the 24th of August were partly, as we have said, pleasure-seekers, brought thither by the cheap excursion trains from Paris, and partly *savants* from all parts of France; a marked absence of foreigners characterising the lists of visitors published daily during the Congress.

Whilst science was bringing hundreds of votaries to Nantes, superstition was taking hundreds of votaries away. On the 23rd, 1,500 pilgrims set out for

Notre Dame de Lourdes ; thus, at the very time when the learned were exulting on the progress of science in France, the Breton pilgrims were chanting in procession—

> La Bretagne est toujours fidèle
> À l'Église et au Pontife-Roi !

The *savants* prayed for France first and science afterwards ; but the faithful for Rome first and their country next—a distinction not to be passed over without comment.

Before describing the proceedings of the fourth Congress of the French Association for the Advancement of Science it is advisable to sketch its history. Founded upon the British Association and the German Congress of Naturalists, in 1872, it has rapidly increased the number of its members from 242 to upwards of 1,600, and has organised four congresses, respectively at Bordeaux, Lyons, Lille, and Nantes,[1] all of which must be pronounced successful. Among the happiest results of the French Association may be mentioned such aids to scientific research as the founding of the Aquarium at Wimereux, near Boulogne, and the Geological Expedition despatched under its auspices to the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam. These facts are mentioned *inter alia*, whilst the advantages of the annual congress, in bringing the most advanced minds together, cannot be over-estimated. By such means, moreover, the importance of science is impressed on the multitude; thus the Bordeaux Congress was the signal for a general

[1] Another Congress took place this present year.

movement in scientific inquiry, out of which arose various learned societies in that and other towns.

In his opening speech, M. d'Eichthal, President of this year's Congress, dwelt in forcible language on the importance of scientific teaching in France. Politics are never wholly absent from the daily incidents of French life, and it was hardly likely that in the opening speech the subject now uppermost in the minds of liberal-minded Frenchmen should be ignored. We suppose it is pretty generally understood by English readers of French newspapers now, what the law called *La Loi sur la Liberté de l'Instruction supérieure* means; but in England we are far from realising the dismay with which Monseigneur Dupanloup's measure was regarded by Republican France. He threw out the hope, moreover, that the meeting of the French Association for the Advancement of Science at Nantes might bring about the foundation of a free University in the capital town of Brittany, and pointed out the incontestable advantage such an institution would possess over those in Paris, which are often the means of demoralising country youths and alienating them from their families. Unfortunately, private and local enterprises are in France sadly fettered by want of funds; and while the Church, as is the case in England, has only to hold out her hands for any funds she may require to promote her ends, it is not so with other bodies. Just now, moreover, in consequence of the war taxes, private generosity is sadly limited in France. The cost of living is so greatly increased even in provincial towns and the country, that to make ends meet

is the chief problem of the middle and lower classes. We hear complaints of this on all sides. Not only luxuries, such as the billiard-table, taxed since the war 60 frs. yearly, and the cigar, are enormously taxed, but the necessaries of daily life, meat, sugar, coffee, &c., have become one-third dearer. A half-penny has been added to the home postage-stamp; whilst, as every traveller knows, the price of railway travelling is very much higher in France than it used to be. In the face of these facts, therefore, it is hardly to be wondered at that such appeals as those just mentioned are coldly met. The French, always an economical people, however much they may desire to forward the scheme of free universities, have not the means at their disposal to do so. The richer classes, on the other hand, in a commercial city like Nantes, for example, are generally, if not in sympathy with the clerical propaganda, at least opposed to those of the Republicans. Thus, between two stools, it is feared that the Free University will fall to the ground, and the Catholic University flourish as the bay-tree.

It is difficult in a brief sketch like the present to convey an idea of the manifold interests which made up the Congress as a whole; but perhaps the best means of describing it is to point out some of the leading characteristics distinguishing this from our own scientific meetings, and also to name some of the subjects that more especially occupied public attention. The excursions entered largely into the annual programme, and combined much amusement and information. For this object of the Congress, Nantes

was eminently fitted, places of extraordinary interest being within a few hours' reach by road, rail, or river. Among these may be mentioned the Agricultural College of Grand Jouan, which I have described elsewhere; Ancenis, full of interest for the archæologist; Couëron and Basse-Indre, famous for their State foundries and smelting works; and last, but not least, the 'stone array' of Carnac. But if the genial French character demands that scientific studies and investigations be more liberally interspersed with recreation than the soberer English mind, it must be admitted that business was not neglected. What, indeed, with the daily work of the sections, afternoon visits to manufactories and museums, evening lectures, musical entertainments and operas, and the highly interesting but no less fatiguing excursions before-mentioned, the *savants* in Brittany led a hard life of it.

Take one day as an example—namely, that of the excursion to Couëron and Basse-Indre. Soon after seven o'clock A.M., the little steamer placed at our disposal began to fill, and it was easy to see that the day's programme was popular. When eight o'clock arrived, the hour fixed for departure, numbers still continued to arrive, and a little grace was accorded for the sake of those seen hastening towards us in the distance. On the appearance of a band of musicians there were good-natured remonstrances among the crowd. We were already packed as closely as herrings in a barrel —surely we had better leave the musicians behind! But when was any transaction, grave or gay, enacted in France without music? The musicians were, of course, accommodated; and so, with bands playing,

colours flying, and guns firing, to the amusement of hundreds of spectators on shore, the heavily laden little steamer shoved off. The weather was brilliant—as it always seems to be here—and, chatting pleasantly with this acquaintance and that, we enjoyed the quiet scenery of the Loire—low-lying banks which we sometimes seemed nearly to touch, thickly planted with willows and bulrushes and feathery spikes of the rose-pink salicaria amid the green. Sometimes we came suddenly upon a group of village children bathing, who would gaze at us in wondering amazement, or a little garden lying close to the water's edge with picturesque old women knitting under the thickly-trellised vines, or a company of washerwomen beating their linen under a penthouse. But the banks of the Loire between Nantes and Couëron are monotonous, and as we had no awning to protect us from the sun, we were most thankful to alight. Here, warned of our approach by guns firing, a crowd of spectators had lined the place of embarkation, and in a few minutes the *savants* were overrunning the smelting works like a swarm of bees. Among the company were a large number of ladies; and, we suppose, in order to do credit to the Association, and prove to the multitudes that a love of science is not incompatible with a feminine taste for dress, all the Frenchwomen had come in elegant Parisian toilettes. It was an unprofitable sight to see their long silk and muslin skirts trailing on the ground, covered with cinders, mud, or dirty water, as the case might be.

At Couëron we were initiated into the process of extracting silver from lead, which is much too long

and complex to describe here. We then embarked again for the little island of Indret, in order to see the State iron foundries; but, after our cup of coffee at half-past six, were not sorry to breakfast first. A déjeûner was prepared in a long tent looking on the Loire, decorated with tricolours and flowers in abundance; but whether our numbers were greatly in excess of those expected, or whether some department of the commissariat had been entrusted to incompetent hands, I cannot say; certain it is that the large and distinguished company who sat down were far from sufficiently provided for. However, the repast was a merry and noisy one, and the toasts and speeches that concluded it greatly edified the peasant folk who had gathered round to listen. There is a geniality and a democratic spirit about French life that is one of its pleasantest features. It amused these good people to watch us, and no policeman was there to say 'Move on.' Indret is the scene of one of the most important State industries in France. Here are made the enormous engines of the ironclads and men-of-war of the Republic. The foundries employ many thousand workmen, and the post of Director is one of the most important official positions in France.

There is something sublime in such triumphs of human intelligence over natural forces as were here presented to us. At three o'clock the workmen poured in from their brief rest, gaunt, bronzed, scantily clothed, but for the most part well-disposed looking fellows, upon whose accustomed brows soon gathered the thick perspiration. Some went one way, some another, each to his appointed place, and slowly

but surely the vast machinery was set to work. When at length—as if endued with a human faculty of obedience, the monster cauldron moved towards the mould in readiness for it, and tipping edgeways, discharged the molten iron, a river of flame, smooth, compact, unbroken—the spectacle appeared superhuman. As the fuming metal descended, it sent up showers of sparks and meteoric stars that flew in all directions, the whole lending to the dusky Cyclops standing by a weird, unearthly aspect. What pigmies we all seemed in comparison to such toilers as these! and how easy it would have been for them — supposing French workmen to be the monsters they are sometimes taken for—to have wreaked their vengeance upon their enemies! There was one gentleman present who bore a name of such evil omen in France that one would not have been surprised at anything. But these poor foundrymen appeared the very reverse of revolutionary. On the contrary, they looked the picture of unremonstrating endurance. The schools were all closed on account of the summer holidays, but we saw the class-rooms of those kept by the Frères Ignorantins, and had a long talk with the Brother left in charge. He told us what sounded satisfactory, that of the scholars one-third attended the night-schools after leaving; but this statement is at variance with another, namely, that the population of Indret and the surrounding villages is extremely low in moral and religious tone. 'C'est une très-mauvaise population,' said the Brother. If this is so, then it clearly proves that some other influence than that of the priests is needed to raise it. After resting

some time in the pleasant garden of the Director's house, an old mediæval château on the banks of the river, we were again closely packed in our little steamer, and started for Nantes. That evening there was a more than a usual supply in the way of entertainment—a concert given to the members of the Congress by the Nantes Quartet Society, a reception at the Préfecture, operas, lectures, and promenade concerts at the fashionable club of Le Sport. Many wearied members, doubtless, preferred to dine quietly and go to bed betimes, for the day had been exceedingly hot and fatiguing.

Sunday was one of the busiest days of the session, and a description of it will give a very good idea of the odd medley of science and amusement that make up a Science Congress in France. Early in the morning a small party of excursionists set off for St. Nazaire and Le Croisic, but the majority preferred to stay in Nantes to enjoy the society of their friends, and the numerous amusements offered them by the generosity of the town, such as private archæological collections, the museums, manufactories, and more especially, music. The day was pre-eminently a musical one, being more especially devoted to the reception of those *orphéonistes*, or amateur musical societies, which had promised to add lustre to the Congress.

For the first time Nantes was to receive thirteen bands from different towns of Brittany and Anjou, many of whom had gained considerable reputation. All the city had turned out to witness their entry, and by ten o'clock the Place Graslin, the central square, and streets leading to it, were crowded with spectators.

It was an animating spectacle, and for picturesqueness you would hardly match the crowd anywhere in Europe. Here were peasant-folks from far and near, pretty maidens from Anjou with their fan-shaped lace caps and butterfly bows at the top, gay little shawls covering their shoulders, white chemisettes and bib-aprons, all coquettishly arranged; portly matrons from Rennes with their black serge nun-like gowns gathered in thick plaits round the waist, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and head-dress of stiff white muslin so arranged as to form a kind of Ionic scroll on the head; women of La Vendée, wearing the large square caps of transparent muslin, similar in shape to those worn by their ancestresses in the Vendean war, and Breton women in every imaginable head-dress into which muslin, net, or lace can be fashioned. All were exceedingly well dressed—that is to say, their clothes were good and neatly put on. You seldom see a slattern among these country women, and their strict adhesion to traditional costume entirely preserves them from the vulgarity and pretentiousness of our village girls on high days and holidays. With these, some hundreds of ladies and children in fashionable toilettes, blue-bloused peasants carrying their children; and, in fine, all the population of Nantes, excepting the nuns and the priests, had turned out to witness the sight.

Great was the excitement of the crowd when at last the *orphéonistes* appeared; and though at the eleventh hour several societies found it impossible to come, the show was imposing. First came the popular band of the Angers fire-brigade, bearing a time-

honoured banner presented to their predecessors for gallant conduct forty years ago; then the band of La Roche-sur-Yonne, in La Vendée, one of the most important of these amateur societies. It is composed of forty members, presided over by a physician, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, who for seventeen years has held the post of mayor of the town. Upon this occasion the bands being placed in order, a competition concert was given, and numerous prizes ranging from 1,000 to 100 francs, and gold and silver medals, were awarded. These facts are worth notice, as they show the love of music of the lighter kind possessed by the French people. When the bands separated—the wind instrumentalists to perform a *fanfare* in one theatre, the rest concerted pieces in another—both places were crowded. The democratic spirit witnessed in every kind of entertainment here was more particularly seen at these concerts, when, as is usual, only one price—namely, a franc—being charged for admittance, the doors were alike besieged by rich and poor, who sat wherever they chose.

Later on, at the magnificent *fête de nuit* in the Jardin des Plantes, it did one's heart good to see what numbers of village folk from the neighbouring villages had flocked to the town to behold the illuminations and the fireworks. Of the twenty and odd thousands who paid their franc, I should say one-half were of the working and small shop-keeping classes, all as well behaved, and, in the sense of appropriateness, as well dressed, as their richer neighbours. It was a touching sight to see aged peasant folk, men and women, leaning on the arms of their children and looking with childish

delight on the fairy-like scene around them. Some of these octogenarians—especially the women in their white hood-shaped caps and black gowns, with white habit-shirts and gay handkerchiefs folded crossways on the breast—were studies Rembrandt would have delighted in; their sunburnt toilworn features often having much shrewdness of expression and dignity of character. The spacious gardens were lighted up from end to end with myriads of Chinese lanterns and tiny globe-shaped lamps, festooned like beads from tree to tree. Not a corner of the place was left in darkness, and as the evening wore on, and the summer sky darkened, the brilliance of illuminated alley and lake and parterre was dazzling. Soon the wide central avenue was so crowded that it was impossible to move except with the stream, and at ten o'clock more visitors continued to arrive. A few priests might be seen, though, as their doctrines forbid mundane pleasures, their presence seemed unaccountable. But all was quiet mirth and enjoyment, and upon an English mind the contrast could but force itself between such an entertainment and any in our own country. We have festivals in plenty, but each is intended for a class, and none can be called popular in the proper sense of the word, excepting perhaps a Sunday-school tea. When were 20,000 English people of all ranks ever assembled together on terms of perfect equality for the simple purpose of enjoyment? Selections from the glorious music of the *Judas Maccabæus* and fireworks completed the evening's festivity, and it was long past midnight before the vast crowds had found their homes. Next day a charwoman said to me, 'What a

fête it was, mon Dieu, and what lovely music! I knew how it would be, so I sent for all my own people from the country, and didn't we enjoy ourselves?'

Thus much for the pleasures, and now for the business, of the Congress. Among the scores of papers read it is impossible to do more than mention a few, although many were of extreme interest, as were also the discussions they furnished. The French Association includes social science, and is divided into the following sections:—Physics, chemistry, agriculture, geology, zoology, botany, mathematical science, civil engineering, geography, medical science, anthropology, statistics, and political economy. One of the most popular subjects, to judge of the large audiences, was that of recent Polar exploration, more especially with reference to English enterprise and the various expeditions despatched in search of the great navigator, Franklin. Certainly, the one or two English listeners present must have been gratified at the generous homage paid to our national enterprise upon this occasion, which was not the only one devoted to the North Pole.

To show the variety of subjects introduced, I will mention a paper read by M. Quivogne, veterinary surgeon, of Lyons, on the importation of French horses by Germany, a paper read over again by request before a general audience. M. Quivogne proved by facts and figures that, contrary to the general belief, it is not France that imports larger numbers of horses than formerly from Germany, but Germany, since the war, has monopolised the war-horses of France, whilst France has only purchased of Germany during that

time 8,947 horses, just one-fourth of those exported by her. Again, that invaluable animal, the mule, so useful in war transport, has been in far greater demand since 1871, 56,290 being exported by France during the last three years. In the face of these facts, M. Quivogne insisted upon the necessity of forbidding by law this monopoly of French horses and mules, which in war are as necessary as the soldier, and should therefore as zealously be retained.

Among other noteworthy papers read in this section was that of Dr. Trélat, the younger, of Paris, on the lighting of schools. Dr. Trélat briefly described the conclusions arrived at by Herr Liebreich concerning bilateral windows in schools. Facts have proved that in schools lighted by windows on both sides children suffer more or less from injured vision; and so important has the subject appeared to the authorities in Germany, that a law has been passed prohibiting bilateral windows in schools. In Wurtemburg a similar prohibition was issued in August 1870, whilst in Silesia and Bavaria schools are all lighted on one side only. Passing over the undoubted ill effects of the old system on the eye-sight and general physique of the children, Dr. Trélat insisted upon the fatal influences on the artistic faculty. When a child is placed in a medium where the light is so arranged as to destroy all form, it naturally follows that its perception of plastic beauty is destroyed. The child's eye being accustomed to dwell upon uncertain forms, owing to the bad arrangement of light and shade, does not learn to know what form really is. Dr. Trélat finally called attention to the necessity of following the example of Germany

and building schools that should be lighted on one side only.

Another medical paper of great interest was that of Dr. Poggioli, on the application of electricity to the physical and intellectual development of children. Dr. Poggioli cited some extraordinary cures effected by the electric gymnasium, more especially of what may be called moral torpor and incapacity. Children before unable to apply themselves to anything or help themselves, after several applications of the electrical *gymnase*, learned to read, write, cypher with great rapidity, and were otherwise placed on an equal footing with children of their age! Dr. Papillaud discoursed upon chloral and bromide of potassium, and drew attention to the uses to which chloral might humanely be put in alleviating the sufferings of the dying. He cited as an example the case of a young girl to whom chloral had been administered in the last stages of consumption, thus saving her from that long and often terrible struggle for breath which is the fate of others similarly afflicted.

In the anthropological section, the ethnology and archæology of Brittany and North-west France occupied a prominent place.

On the whole, the fourth Congress of the French Association for the Advancement of Science must be pronounced a success; and no stranger present could have failed to bring away a higher notion than ever of French urbanity, intellect, and devotion to the study of scientific truth.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN AUTUMN TRIP IN BRITTANY.

I. MORBIHAN.

IT was Émile Souvestre himself, a Bas Breton, who may be said to have discovered that *terra incognitâ* fifty years ago, known as *la petite Bretagne.* But an earlier traveller still had already written an account of his travels there; and though they were not of a kind to tempt others in the same direction, doubtless they awakened Émile Souvestre to the true interest of his native province, just as his own writings in their time set all travelling or travelled France on the *qui vive* to see places and people as unknown to them as those of Timbuctoo, or the undiscovered Oceanic Islands. Cambry set out on his travels in 1794, that is to say, during the Convention; and his account is all the more interesting, from being written at the time when Brittany, as one of the insubordinate provinces, lay under the ban of governmental displeasure. A more melancholy journey than his cannot be conceived. Added to the dirt and squalor that then characterised the rural districts, was a wide-spread and oppressive despair. The treatment of the non-juror priests crushed the pious Breton peasants and humbled them to the very dust.

He describes the country-people as superstitious as those of the African Sahara, dirty as human beings can be,[1] yet he goes on to say, hospitable, intelligent, shrewd, though they live in the midst of sorcerers, phantoms, ghosts and shadows, fairies, demons, and hobgoblins. A deplorable picture is this that Cambry paints of Brittany in 1794, some of his descriptions holding good to this day. Certainly nothing can look dirtier than an ordinary Breton village on what is called in country dialect, a 'sloshy day;' yet the worst forms of dirt have disappeared, and the state of the province must generally be described as flourishing, if not quite progressive.

Émile Souvestre, the Columbus of an El Dorado hitherto undreamed of, charmingly describes in one of

[1] 'Il n'y a point de pays, même en Afrique, où l'homme soit plus superstitieux qu'il l'est en Brétagne. Les prêtres avant la Révolution étaient, pour ainsi dire, adorés comme des dieux. Généralement les paysans n'ont regretté, ni leur roi, ni leurs nobles, mais ils ont pleuré la perte de leurs pasteurs. Et quelle extravagance n'ont-ils pas faite, quelle joie d'enfance n'ont-ils pas temoignée quand on les leur a rendus? Ils ont retrouvé leur soutien, leur appui, leur tristesse s'est évanouie, leur ciel est devenu serein, ils ont vu renaître leur courage.' He describes their dwellings as for the most part mere hovels, the holes in the floor, or rather ground, for floors there were, and still are none, and often being so deep as to cause broken legs to the children. 'Ces hommes,' he writes further, 'sont incorrigibles. Imaginez la malpropreté, l'humidité, la boue qui règnent dans ces demeures souterraines, l'eau de fumier qui souvent en défend l'entrée, et qui presque toujours y pénètre. Ajoutez à la malpropreté la gale héréditaire, la malpropreté des gens qui ne se baignent, ne se lavent jamais, qui sortent des fosses, des mares, des cloaques où l'ivresse les avait précipités; peignez-vous ces cheveux plats et longs, cette barbe épaisse, ces figures étranges de races crasseuses, les courts gilets, les culottes énormes, les petits boutons, les guêtres, les sabots qui forment leur habillement, et vous aurez l'idée d'un paysan Breton.'

his works, how he set out to Paris in his youth to make his fortune, failed, and, returning to his native Morbihan, there discovered a virgin mine of literary wealth. Brittany, pre-eminently the land of fairy tale, legend, and romance, waited alike its chronicler, its poet, and its philosopher, all of which it found in her children, Émile Souvestre and his fellow-countrymen, Brizeux, the last of the bards, and Villemarqué, who has done for the poetry of the Breton people what Bishop Percy has done for ourselves. The works of these three writers, then, should form the traveller's portable library in his journey through Brittany; but as Émile Souvestre's delicious fairy tales and legends, and Villemarqué's songs and ballads, are tolerably known even among English readers, I will only confine my remarks to Brizeux, true Breton and true poet, who died in 1858. Brizeux did not set himself the task of poetising the Brittany of the past and its warlike heroes, the Du Guesclins, De Montforts, the De Clissons. With real poetic instinct, he discovered in the daily life around him inspirations of strains so sweet and simple that they may be compared to 'Hermann and Dorothea' and the 'Deserted Village.' In his most characteristic poem, 'Les Bretons,' he relates in language alternately joyous and plaintive, but poetic always, the loves, hopes and sorrows, dreams and aspirations of the Bretons of to-day, the flowers of legend and romance being interwoven with their common, homely, care-laden existence.

Here are charming descriptions of a *Pardon* at Auray, which any traveller may see now-a-days at a village fête at Carnac, in honour of St. Cornely,

patron of oxen; also to be seen by the lucky tourist occasionally, of the hardy life of the fisher and mountaineering populations of the awful coasts of Cornouaille and the solitary Arez hills. Again, we have brought before us that weird religious ceremonial, *La Nuit des Morts*, when the peasant folks spread a funereal repast, and retire leaving it for the dead—the song of the conscripts, as they take leave of their beloved Brittany—the parish priest setting out on his pious *quêtes*, or almskeeping—in fine, every phase of rural life, every corner of Breton soil, is here painted in glowing yet faithful colours; and to realise how much poetry still underlies the apparently commonplace life of the modern Armorica, we must familiarise ourselves with the works of Brizeux.

The opening lines to 'Les Bretons' give the key note to the entire poem:—

'The Loire enticed me on its waters, till Nantes appeared—Nantes! the superb, with all her thousand ships. Soon I was on that wild tract, where Brittany opens itself like a desert. I saw the wide river, the solitary Menhir; I heard the pure speech of my fathers, spoken from far-off Ind to west. I saw at last, the sea, the sea—the sombre-shadowing oaks, the little huts in the midst of fields of buck-wheat, the passing pilgrims with their shaggy locks. All charmed my soul, all intoxicated me to behold! Thy crown, oh queen! is fallen, but thy rustic grace, so sweet, so serious, remains! May these verses, consecrated to thee, my country, become dear to the Bretons! become their songs of every day!'

Auguste Brizeux was born at Lorient in 1803, of a family originally Irish. The Brizeux (Brizeuk, meaning Breton, from Breiz, Brittany) came over after the revolution of 1688, and settled in Cournaille. Of singular sweetness and purity of character, Brizeux was greatly beloved, and widely recognised before his premature death from consumption, at the age of fifty. A fellow poet wrote some memorial verses in Breton, which were sung at his grave, and another wrote also in the same language with which Brizeux had been so familiar—'Brizeux est mort, le barde d'Arvor! il est mort, pour revivre dans un monde meilleur: Chantez le chant d'adieu, ô vous, forêts et mer!'

The last of the travellers who sets forth on his journey through Brittany in the middle of October, has many compensations for the unbroken spell of glorious weather his predecessors have most likely enjoyed from May till September. If the days are short and the evenings long, if the fitful gleams of sunshine alternate with gusts of wind and April-like showers, if the roads are miry and the rustic lanes—so suggestive of Devonshire—impracticable, at least he has the satisfaction of a comfortable inn and blazing wood fire; of many a lovely rainbow spanning the yellow woods and hanging pastures, of additional wildness and majesty lent by sombre skies and rushing winds to the lonely pine forest, the mountain torrent, and above all, the rocky coast. Then there can be no doubt that, as far as creature comforts go, he fares far better; the best rooms are everywhere at his disposal, he can dine how and when he pleases,

he can have the best seat in the diligence, the best horse and carriage—in fine, the best of everything without depriving anyone else. Thus, although I started from Nantes so late as October 15, and encountered an unusual amount of bad weather for the time of the year, I think such an inconvenience is more endurable than that of sultry days, crowded inns and railway carriages, and all kinds of delays and hindrances inevitable during the 'tourist' season. It happened to be market-day, when a good many country folks travel on the 'Ligne de Bretagne,' and an incident that occurred to me whilst waiting for the train gave the key-note of that Breton character of which I had heard so much during the past few weeks. An old peasant woman, in the characteristic costume of Morbihan — black dress, embroidered stomacher, and spotless white *coiffe* with broad lappets, pinned up so as to form a kind of Ionic scroll on the head—came up to me, and said 'Are you going into Brittany? If so, travel in the same compartment with me, and then we can help each other with our baskets.' This is the tone taken by all; friendly, nay, familiar, yet perfectly respectful, and without a vestige of anything that could be called impertinence. The Breton is proud, dignified, serious. Whether you converse with your driver, whose bare feet are encased in straw and *sabots*, and who can only express himself in imperfect French, or with the learned doctor you find quietly pursuing his avocations in his native town at the land's end of France, you perceive the same leading characteristics -an ardent love of all pertaining to 'La Bretagne,'

a lofty bearing, and a depth and balance of character quite consistent with our preconceived notions gained from history and romance. It is the same with all classes — innkeepers, shop-people, towns-folk and country-folk. They receive you with courtesy—nay, *bonhomie*—and do everything in their power to make you comfortable, but without any obsequiousness, much less servility. In this respect they recall the Swiss, and not the least of the numerous pleasures of travelling in Brittany is the perpetual *entourage* of frank out-spoken country-folks, who neither bow nor cringe to their social superiors, but treat them exactly the same as their own friends and neighbours. The same sort of spirit more or less animates all the French population, though not combined with the sturdiness and sterling qualities of the Breton character. Thus, third class carriages are provided with foot-warmers and reserved compartments for ladies, and third class passengers meet with the same courtesy and respect as first and second. Those who travel third class in England know well enough that it is not so, and that ladies travelling alone that way have to put up with smoking, often with drunken passengers, not to speak of cold feet. If you wish to become acquainted with the country-folk, and see their costumes moreover, by third class you must travel in Brittany, especially on Sundays and market-days, when they turn out in holiday dress.

Vannes—so celebrated in the history of Cæsar—is the usual halting-place of travellers entering Brittany from southern or central France, and though hastily dismissed by guide-books, has a peculiar interest. In

the first place, Vannes is the threshold of that vast consecrated ground—for, whether the stones of Carnac and Locmariaquer are sepulchral, monumental, or religious, we must so regard it—of those Celtic ancestors whose worship and history have been lost in remote ages; and in the second, the little museum contains relics of that complicated historical stratification which makes Brittany so interesting a country alike for the archæologist, the historian, and the artist. By turns Celtic, Gallo-Roman, Christian, Protestant, Catholic, Brittany is still the land of mysticism, legend, and romance; and all this is realised by the traveller, who begins his survey here with the rough-hewn implements of these rude forefathers—mere chips and fragments of flint and stone—then passes on to the oar-shaped weapons of jade and diorite, polished smooth as an egg, and showing considerable skill and manipulation; then to the small metal knives and daggers, in form reminding one of the thick-ribbed, spade-shaped leaves of some water plants; the bracelets, solid pieces of bronze, beaten out into patterns; the rude pottery; to the highly finished Roman coins, medallions, and ornaments; and lastly the mediæval arms, escutcheons, and embroideries—the relics of those powerful ecclesiastical foundations whose traces are scattered so plentifully over Brittany. Thus we have an index to the book we are about to read, and if many of its chapters remain mysteries still, light is at least thrown upon some.

It is worth while to enter the churches, not for the sake of any architectural beauty—for they are here insignificant and filled with every imaginable kind of

trumpery, grotesque saints and simpering virgins, artificial flowers, gold tinsel and death's heads mixed together—but to see the people. There are always men and women kneeling before this saint and that; often market folks who deposit their huge baskets on the ground, whilst they pray with often a rapt expression on their toil-worn, weather-beaten faces. And on a bright summer day—for this 16th of October I speak of reminds me of July—there is no more charming walk than that eastward of the town. On one side—above winding river, and shady walk, and picturesque houses—rise the grey walls and towers of the old fortifications. On the other, terrace upon terrace of green sward, with stately avenues, lead to a broad close or green, from whence you look across Lombardy poplars towards Nantes. Heaths, woods, pastures and river, make up a wide invigorating prospect. That evening I went on to St. Anne, the Mecca of Brittany, whither resort hundreds of thousands of pilgrims yearly; no longer all on foot, as in the old days, but by excursion trains, as the following advertisement on the walls of the railway station testified:—'Pèlerinage à St. Anne, Auray. Billets d'aller et retour à prix réduit,' &c., &c. The fact is that the 'pilgrimage season,' except among the peasants, answers very much to the 'tourist season' with us, and these cheap return tickets to St. Anne, Mont St. Michel, the Pyrenees, and other places, are often used by pilgrims in search of health, pleasure, and change of scene only. I remember asking a young Catholic lady if any of her friends were gone on a certain pilgrimage that had already started from

Nantes, and she said: 'Oui, sans doute. Que voulez-vous?—c'est la saison de voyager.' But all this was over now, and next morning when I looked out of my window the rain was pouring down in torrents, and only a few peasants were trudging with big and red umbrellas towards the miraculous fountain and the shrine before which mass is celebrated in the open air to vast multitudes on certain days in the year. These 'Pardons,' so poetically described by Émile Souvestre, are to be seen all over Brittany, but especially at St. Anne, the family saint of the Bretons, the protectress of sailors; and even on this wet October morning some trade was going on in wax lights, rosaries, and artificial flowers. Devotion is combined with innocent gratification also; and outside any church, on Sunday, you find booths of cakes, fruit, and hot coffee, and in some places, haberdashery, clothes, and toys. When the doors of the church were thrown open at half-past eight, crowds poured in despite the bad weather, and no doubt at high mass and vespers there were crowds too. I never yet attended service in Brittany without finding the church quite full; and these congregations, made up of nuns in their quaint garb, and country folks in their characteristic and often beautiful costume, form a strange and imposing spectacle. The piety of the poorer people is touching to behold. They will raise rosary or image to their lips and kiss it passionately, and remain for hours kneeling or crouching on the stones before some favourite saint. Nor are the men less devout than the women. On Sundays there is an equal number of both sexes, and on market-days they will

leave their business to say a prayer in church quite as a matter of course.

At the station I saw a girl in the costume of Bannalec—an interesting and captivating figure. She had a sweet, tender, pensive face, and her dress was piquant and becoming past description; a coiffe in two parts, the upper fitting to the head and flowing from each ear in a fan-shaped lappet, the under covering the crown of the head like a nun's veil, a large muslin collar closely plaited like those in some of Vandyke's pictures, vest of dark blue cloth, cut square in front, showing a white-worked stomacher, and braided with a rich orange, crimson, red and green braid, the pattern corresponding in front and back, the skirt of that substantial Normandy cloth that country people wear so much of, gathered in close folds round the waist so as to form a most graceful skirt. As we journeyed on to Auray in the rain, I saw many of those good cloth petticoats and dresses, blue, scarlet, green and purple—a comfortable sight on a chilly day! A silent dead and alive place is this Auray on a wet Sunday, yet the people do their best to keep themselves alive. All the shops are open, bands of music are playing, and the town crier goes drumming through the town, announcing sales, concerts, and other events of public interest. This primitive method of advertising—also applied to deaths—is common in Brittany, and strikes the stranger oddly. A spell of rainy weather is tolerable in my comfortable Hôtel de Pavillon d'En Haut (an inn in which, to borrow Charles Lamb's expression, you can snugify) with a charming landlady, and for chamber-

maid one of the most beautiful creatures I ever saw in my life. At St. Anne the maid was fresh as a rose-bud, with a childish, naïve expression, delicious blue eyes and fair hair; but the Auray beauty is of a much rarer and more elevated type, though of the same country. Rich olive complexion, with a tinge of rose; exquisitely chiselled features; dark, tender, velvety eyes, and delicately pencilled eye-brows, are set off to their best advantage in her simple yet dignified costume of white contadina-like head-dress and black gown, so graceful and so unfashionable! It is necessary to travel in Brittany to see what a beautiful thing a woman's dress may be; and our English girls would do well to copy many of their skirts, vests and sleeves. The entire absence of vulgarity in texture is no less noteworthy. The richest ladies wear no softer cashmere, no finer cambric, no more substantial cloth than these country women; but they must be seen on Sunday, when all is fresh, spotless, and bright.

Next day it cleared up, and as I drove towards Carnac, amid glowing gorse, purpling fern and mellow woods, I said to myself, 'This is the time to see Brittany!' It was one of those charming grey days, with breaks of blue, a soft west wind driving light cumuli across the sky, and now and then an April-like shower, forerunner of a lovely rainbow. The wild gorge at the beginning of the Carnac road reminds me of Haslemere in Sussex, and all through my Breton journey I find myself saying—'How like Wales! how like Sussex! how like Cornwall!' So greatly does La Petite Bretagne resemble La Grande! Wild sweeps of heath, with low-lying pastures, herds of little black and white Breton cows, magpies, jays, and crows flying

about the hedges, quaint stone windmills, low, thatched one-storied cottages, pine woods, pools, and marshes, and lastly the sea. Such is the scenery of the nine miles drive from Auray to Carnac.

The stones of Carnac,[1] like the Pyramids of Egypt, are indescribable, and like the Pyramids superhumanly grand, monotonous, imposing. There is nothing human about them; and the traveller just arrived in this 'antique land' feels inclined to throw away inference, suggestion, and all results of historic research, solving the mystery by Titanic mythos only. What giant precursors of the human race raised these obelisks of unhewn stone, these stupendous altars, untouched by hammer or chisel, these gloomy temples, rude and stupendous as the Cyclopean walls of Mycenæ? Surely the hands of some barbaric mengods are here; and when we try to read the enigma otherwise, we are pouring water through sieves and wasting our labour in vain. After all that has been written about the 'stone array' of Carnac and Erdeven, the underground temple, tomb, and prison of Gàvr' Innis, and the broken column of Locmariaquer, living authorities sum up their theories with the same conclusion that a well-known French writer arrived at forty years ago. In 1835, Prosper Merimée, then inspector-general of historic monuments in France, wrote to the Minister of the Interior concerning the monuments called Celtic or Druidic, 'The almost absolute want of authentic information condemns my researches as sterile by anticipation, but at least they leave ample scope for the imagination.'

[1] In Breton Carnac means the place of the mounds—*locus acervorum.*

'There is nothing in history, and hardly anything in tradition, that throws any light on the mystery,' writes one author; and another, H. Martin, the historian,[1] concludes his speculations by the observation that of all the hypotheses projected, each may fall far short of the truth. The fancy cannot picture a wilder, more grandiose scene, than the consecrated ground of barbaric races beside the sea. A little girl, wild as an Arab, and speaking only Breton, led me across heath and brushwood to 'The Stones,' as these monuments are called by the poor people; and there leaving me, I wandered about the strange scene alone. There were magpies chattering on the low tamarisk bushes, and rooks cawing over-head, and cattle grazing close by; but otherwise how savage it was, how solitary, how silent! Beyond a ridge of sombre pines, gaunt windmills, and scattered farm-buildings, lay the wide-stretching sea, to-day pale blue and monotonous, whilst all around, amid flaming gorse, and fading fern and heather, mixed bronze and reddish purple, rose by hundreds the mysterious granite tombs, monuments, symbols, we know not what! No wonder the peasant folks, however ready to interpret marvels by the light of monkish legend and miracle, see in these phalanxes the pagan persecutors of St. Cornely, metamorphosed by him in holy wrath into stone. Certainly, without any preconceived notions whatever, and without any reference to historic research, the spectator's first conclusion would be that the plain of Carnac is a vast

[1] See H. Martin's 'Archéologie Celtique' for much that is interesting on these subjects.

cemetery, and that the rude monuments scattered broadcast on every side were raised after the manner of the earliest we know of:—'Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.'—Genesis xxxv. 20.

We have to go to the Bible for another solution of the mystery, namely, that these unhewn dolmens and menhirs were raised by worshippers of one god, who thus carried out the Mosaic injunction, 'And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.'—Exodus xx. 25.

Again, in another passage, we have the same sentiment—'And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord . . . . Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones.'—Deuteronomy xxvii. 5, 6.

It seems almost certain that only religion in those barbaric times can account for works of such prodigious strength and magnitude. Whether indeed the sun-god was herein symbolised, whose praises were chanted by so-called Christian Armorica, when the Druids had ceased to exist, or that strange serpent worship of a remoter period still, or whether these gigantic stone avenues are sepulchral or military monuments raised in memory of great warriors or battles, none can tell. That they are comparatively modern erections, post Roman, post Christian, my mind will not for a moment accept. Here all is dark to me, mysterious, and inexplicable. In visiting the Celtic remains of Morbihan, the spectator is led from

the contemplation of one marvel to another, gradually increasing in magnitude till they culminate in a *crescendo* beyond which imagination cannot go. From the summit of Mount St. Michel, the wide-stretching moor of Carnac, with all its countless menhirs, forming avenues miles in length, can be seen, but it is necessary to visit and examine carefully each separate group before making a general survey. Thus I left my carriage at Kermaria, on the left of the Auray road, and visited first the smaller stones near the little Gallo-Roman town lately excavated by a Scotch archæologist. Then I walked on foot to the far more stupendous remains of Le Bal and Kerlescaut, on the other side of the village of Carnac. In the first, the menhirs, which are of no great height, are scattered about pêle-mêle ; in the last, order is gradually perceived, and the stones increase in height, till, at last, are beheld waving lines and phalanxes, terminating in rows from ten to eighteen feet high. ' It is impossible to convey any idea of such a scene, especially on a grey afternoon, when the surging wind and the sombre colouring of the desolate plain lent added majesty and gloom to these innumerable monoliths, hoary with long white lichens, the growth of ages.

Yet this spectacle, imposing as it is, but faintly recalls the glories and achievements of primitive races, whose outcome and offspring we are. Every day these Celtic monuments diminish, and though some precautions have been taken, they are far from sufficient to protect them against spoliation and injury. Three hundred years ago, a French writer, the Chanoine Moreau, counted from 12,000 to 15,000 men-

hirs or upright stones at Carnac. At present 1,000 only is the number given by accurate observers; and, on every side, may be seen evidence of past destruction, the inhabitants having used the demolished monuments as walls and farm buildings. When Prosper Merimée wrote in 1835, he spoke of 10,000 monuments having been destroyed at Carnac within the few years preceding his visit, so that the work of demolition has gone on with greater rapidity in our own time, the natural consequences of more extensive clearings and cultivation.

One observation will not fail to strike all beholders, and that is, the grotesque element introduced everywhere by these unknown builders. Alike menhirs,[1] peulvens, and dolmens, show a *tour de force* in their construction; thus, the menhirs are often placed on their narrowest points; the enormous slab forming the upper part of the dolmen is always the largest, and its corners just touch the supporting columns; sometimes, as in the case of a lofty monolith standing in a wide open plain leading to Penmarch, near Quimper, the effect of this arrangement is most striking where a menhir may be compared in shape to a blade, narrowest at the point which rests in the ground, but in many cases this grotesqueness is still more salient.

The squalor and almost savageness of the population here can only be compared to the Arab and Kabyle villages in Algeria. Before every hovel is a pool of liquid manure and manure heap; the village

[1] *Menhir*, literally long stone, sun; *peulven*, pillar of stone; *dolmen*, from taal, tath, and maen, stone. In English, cromlech.

street is a slough of filth and mire, and little wild-looking children run after me calling out in broken French — 'Un sou, donnez-moi un sou s'il vous plaît.' Breton is spoken everywhere, and it is useless to interrogate the country people in French. They shake their heads and go on. Carnac is the land of ghosts, hobgoblins, and fairies, bad and good. A weird superstition, that might be made by some Breton poet into legend as fearful as Seidlitz's 'Midnight Review,' or Heine's 'Tuileries,' exists concerning the churchyard. The stranger who passes at midnight finds the tombs open, the church lighted up, and the two thousand skeletons on their knees, listening to Death, who, dressed like a priest, discourses to them from the pulpit! When Émile Souvestre wrote his delightful books about Brittany some forty years ago, this superstition, with many others, was in full force. I drove to Plouharnel to see the little collection of Celtic and Gallo-Roman relics at the inn, and from thence to Port Penthièvre, a distance of two hours or so, that amply repays for the fatigue. In all my journeys — Algerian, Spanish, Oriental — I hardly remember so picturesque, or what the Germans call *malerisch*, a scene. Stretches of moor, 'brown as the ribbed sea sand,' hue ribbed also by the action of the waves, and tinged with the gold of moss and gorse, gloomy tufts of pine and tamarisk, wild-looking women in blue cloth dresses and white hoods, keeping flocks of black or burnt-sienna coloured sheep, and on either side the greyish-blue sea. At Fort Penthièvre I alighted and wandered about the cliffs, perfumed with a deliciously fragrant little carnation, and gorgeous

with patches of red and purple sea-weed. Time did not admit of driving to Quiberon, so celebrated in the final act of the Vendean war, but none should miss the solitary, unspeakably wild and poetic drive to Fort Penthièvre. Coming home, we passed one or two long-haired peasants in broad hats, carting away loads of the *Zosterima maritimes* (used so plentifully in packing Venetian glass) and other sea-weeds, for manure; and we met the diligence slowly wending its way to Quiberon. But otherwise all was silent and solitary as the desert, and the deepening shades of the autumn twilight added new mysteriousness and poetry to brown-gold waste, sombre pine, and purpling sea and sky.

Next day was fine and mild, and I started at ten o'clock for Locmariaquer, or the place of the Virgin Mary, and after an hour's drive through wild scenery, reached the inn, and at once ordered a boat for the island of Gavr' Innis, in Breton—*île du Géant.* Whilst waiting for the boat I went into the church, which is full of painted wooden statues and images, quite worthy of a rude heathen temple. In the aisle stands a hideous covered bier, covered with death's heads, painted white on a black ground—a common sight, as I afterwards found, in Breton churchyards —and outside, of course, the life-sized Calvary, also of wood, crudely painted, yet not without a touch of pathos. These wayside crucifixes, large as life, meet you as often as milestones on the public roads, in some cases rude as the Celtic stones, in others carved, and even artistic. Soon my boatman, named Morvan, appeared—how the name savours of

Fingal!—and conducted me to a long narrow pier, where the boat with two sailors awaited us. This little journey to the Isle de Gavr' Innis is by no means easy, though, as far as distance goes, insignificant; but on account of the currents, it is always necessary to make a long round either going or coming, according to the tide. Then, after rowing strenuously for three-quarters of an hour, we had to get as near as possible to the coast of the opposite island, when the two sailors took off their shoes and stockings, and waded knee-deep to the rocks with ropes. The boat was towed by ropes round the corner, Morvan rowing, I steering, the sailors getting along the rocks and sea-weed as best they could. Having arrived opposite Gavr' Innis, a sail was put up, and we accomplished the rest of the journey easily. No words can convey any idea of the strangeness of the expedition, and of the scenery of Morbihan (Little Sea). The islands of the Breton archipelago here lie as thickly together as those of the Ægean, and according to local tradition are as numerous as the days of the year. In some cases, they are mere grey uninhabited island-rocks; in others, little oases of verdure, with châlets and gardens, farm-buildings and corn-fields; and seen on a bright autumn day—the sky blue and warm, the sea smooth and bluer still—they reminded me of the exquisite scenes of the Greek seas. We land, and clamber up the steep rocks of the green little island, ankle-deep in wet sea-weed, and plunging every minute into pools of water. As we reach the summit, a guide from the smiling little farmstead opposite

comes with the keys and a candle, and we descend to the awful grotto—for awful it is, indeed; gloomy as the subterranean stone chambers of the Pyramids, and as wonderfully constructed. When Prosper Merimée visited this tumulus forty years ago, it was on his hands and knees, but now a passage has been made, and following our conductor, we survey by a feeble light, as well as may be, the strange architecture before us. The chamber and gallery are built of huge blocks of granite, supporting the slabs forming the roof, and if anything could convey an idea of the strength, determination, and originality of these mysterious builders, it is such a work. The walls and columnar stones supporting the roof are covered with carvings, spiral curves indicating the serpent, outlines of weapons, and a kind of ornamentation like the tattooing of New Zealanders; the roof itself is a mere succession of enormous masses of granite, airily, so to speak, superimposed upon the pillars. Here we have exhibitions of the same love of *tours de force*—ingenuity, grotesqueness, call it what we will—I have already spoken of, many of the slabs resting on their narrowest ends. One of these slabs measures twenty feet by sixteen, and the rest are twelve or fourteen feet in length, the entire gallery and chamber measuring fifty-two feet, in a direction nearly east and west. The most curious feature in the monument is, that part of the stone of which it is formed does not belong to the Morbihan archipelago, but must have been brought from a considerable distance—by what means is all mystery. No less mysterious is the engraving on the walls, in which some writers have

seen a primitive language, others hieroglyphics, others mere decoration. Nor has the ingenuity of archæologists been less bestowed upon the circular openings in one side of the central chamber. Some suppose these rings to be connected with sacrificial ceremony, others with marriage rites, others with neither; here again all is unexplained.

The tumulus of Gavr' Innis was discovered in 1838, by the owner of the island, but its present possessor is M. de Closmadeuc, who has written a learned little brochure on the subject, and who has built a little villa here as a summer residence. Almost all these islands of Morbihan possess Celtic remains, but none so interesting or important as Gavr' Innis; and though the expedition is difficult in bad weather, it is not on any account to be missed. Coming home we were drenched by a heavy shower, but at the comfortable little inn I got my clothes dried, and an excellent lunch; after which it cleared up, enabling me to visit on foot the wonderful broken column and celebrated dolmen called Cæsar's Table, or in Breton, Table of the Merchants. These are close together, and are the most remarkable of the numerous Celtic remains scattered about Locmariaquer. The fallen menhir, called here Mener-Hroëk, or Fairy-stone, is to my thinking as impressive as the shattered column of the Olympium at Athens. It is said to be the largest menhir known, being sixty feet in length, and the fallen drums of the column being six feet high and twelve feet broad. Forty years ago the oldest inhabitants could not remember having seen it upright, and some authorities doubt whether it was ever

raised on its base. It is broken into several pieces, which lie at right angles with each other, its gigantic proportions and sombre hue harmonizing with the wild scenery of the plain, the wide-stretching sea, and cold grey rocky islets, dim as spectres in the fading light of the autumn afternoon.

The great cromlech close by is hardly less stupendous. It is a veritable table of stone, constructed of an enormous block of granite, lightly perched, if one may so express it, on four supporting masses, the whole standing out from the lonely landscape with weird, mysterious effect. Two wild-looking little Breton girls had guided me to the spot, and dismissing them, I walked again and again round the shattered column and the strange grotto, altar, temple, whatever it might be. But the more the mind ponders on such phenomena—no other word seems so applicable—the farther off seems the solution, and I drove back to Auray bewildered by the mysteriousness of this 'antique land.' What vicissitudes it has passed through! What transformations it has undergone! What revolutions it has witnessed! Surely from the time when these Titan builders scattered their works broadcast over the land until now, no other country has had so strange a history! We first read of the Druids, teachers of youth, and their awful groves, the sacred dance, the mystic choirs, the dread priestesses, the bards, inciters to glory; then of half-christianized Armorica, whose children, driven from La Grande et La Petite Bretagne, chanted in their own tongue the Psalm of the exiled Israelites, 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept,

when we remembered Zion;' of Arthur, and Merlin, and Gradlon, king of the mighty town of Is; of mediæval legends, and saints innumerable; of a Protestant Brittany, as slowly Catholicised as the Gaelic had been won over to Christianity; of a country, and of a people, in fact, however much changed by circumstances, strangely faithful to its own character and tradition. Wherever you go you find some relic of olden times, fossilized in song, dress, or custom; the Breton youths of the present generation chant as they march to battle the war-song of their forefathers in the days of chivalry and romance—'C'est l'armée d'Arthur, je le sais, Arthur marche au devant! Si nous mourrons comme doivent mourir des Chrétiens, des Bretons, jamais nous ne mourrons trop tôt!'

NOTE.

It may be useful to many readers to give some idea of the propositions laid down by Mr. Ferguson in his work on 'Rude Stone Monuments.' In the first place he notes, it must be noticed that in Algeria and India, where these megalithic remains are found in abundance, nothing is known or heard of the Druids; nor does the testimony of ancient writers connect the two in any way. No classic writer—not even Cæsar, when describing the great sea fight between the Romans and the Veneti, and when he must have had the stones of Carnac if not in sight, at least fresh in memory, supposing, they existed—is silent on the subject. 'Is it likely,' writes Mr. Ferguson, 'that such an artist

would have omitted the chance of heightening his picture by an allusion to the standing stones of Dariorigum?' The briefest yet the most graphic of writers, Cæsar, is hardly likely not to have mentioned monuments that must have been astounding even to the Romans. It seems more probable that he never saw them. Tradition, as well as direct mention by mediæval authors, points to a post-Roman origin. From the early Christian writers we gather that these pagan temples were very much like those built by Christians afterwards; whilst it is evident, from the Decrees of the Councils, that rude stone monuments were objects of veneration down to the time of Alfred. In 452 a Council at Arles decreed that if in 'any diocese any infidel either lighted torches, or worshiped trees, fountains or stones, or neglected to destroy them, he should be found guilty of sacrifice;' and about a century later, a Council at Tours exhorts the clergy to excommunicate those who at certain stones, trees, or fountains perpetrate things contrary to the church.' In 681 a Council at Toledo admonishes those who worship idols or venerate stones, those who light torches or worship fountains or trees, that they are sacrificing to the devil, and subject themselves to various penalties.' As late as the time of Canute the Great, there is a statute forbidding the barbarous adoration of the sun and moon, fire, tombstones, stones, and all kind of trees and wood. This shows that the Christian priesthood did wage a persistent warfare against this kind of idolatry, though we cannot be sure that it is the one in question.

The propositions Mr. Ferguson sets himself to

prove in his work are, therefore, the following:—First, that the rude stone monuments, with which we are generally concerned, are sepulchral, or connected directly or indirectly with the rites of the dead. Secondly, that they were not temples in any usual or appropriate sense of the term. And, lastly, that they were generally erected by partially civilised races after they had come in contact with the Romans, and most of them may be considered as belonging to the first ten centuries of the Christian era.

In accordance with this theory, Mr. Ferguson brings forward a good deal of evidence to support his suggestion that Avebury, in England, is a burying-place, and the mound or barrow at Silbury, a trophy. Dating from Arthur's great battle of Baden Hill, fought in the year A.D. 520, he places the date of Stonehenge considerably later, on account of the superiority of constructive skill displayed. Stonehenge is the only hewn stone monument, 'the megalithic monument in fact, which exhibits the most civilised forms; and to prove its age and use would not necessarily prove those of any rude stone monument found elsewhere.' At Avebury the stones are used rough, in their natural state; at Stonehenge they are hewn and fitted together with considerable nicety. 'Without laying too much stress on the nakedness and blue paint of our ancestors, all history, and the testimony of the barrows, would lead us to suppose that the inhabitants of this island, before the Romans occupied it, was sparse, poor in physique, and in a very low state of civilisation. Though the national spirit may have been knocked out of them, they must have increased in

number, in physical comfort and in civilisation, during the period of the Roman domination, and therefore, in so far as that argument goes, became infinitely more capable of erecting such a monument as Stonehenge after the departure of the Romans than they had been before their coming.' Stonehenge, like Avebury, Mr. Ferguson suggests as the commemoration of some great victory between the Romans and the Saxons. Again, he supposes that the stones at Ashdown, in Berkshire, commemorate the battle fought here between the Danes in the year 871. But it is chiefly on Irish ground that the rude stone monuments seem to bear the proof of historic investigation, and this chapter of Mr. Ferguson's work should be read by all about to visit Brittany and the dolmen regions of France. Next in order after the stones marking battle-fields in Ireland, come the burial-places, all of which are placed in the first four centuries of the Christian era. When we come to France, his theories are still more at variance with generally accepted belief. The peculiar characteristics of the churches throughout the dolmen regions of southern France, in conjuntion with the *ac*-termination, are made to point to a dolmen-building, church-erecting race inhabiting the country in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, wholly distinct from the Celts. The *ac*-termination — witness such names as Carn*ac*, Tumi*ac*, Minil*ac*, and the churches of Senil*ac*, Peąum*ac*, Trimol*ac*—all seem to point to this conclusion. Again, another trait marks this region as a non-Celtic country. To the Celt the transition from Druidism to the priesthood of Rome was easy, but not so with

the race Mr. Ferguson supposes to be descended from the cave-men of the Dordogne. If the dolmen builders are the outcome of the cave-dwellers, then they belong to the least progressive nation of the earth, and it is not to be wondered at that it took two thousand years of Celtic oppression to destroy them.

With regard to distribution of the rude stone monuments, it must be noted that there are no circles in France, or at least nothing to be compared to those of Cumberland and Wiltshire, Mettray or Stennis, or the many examples in Scandinavia.

In France a great predeliction is shown for the so-called 'allée couverte,' or dolmens, the first being that near Mettray and Lokmariaker. Brittany is *par excellence* the land of dolmens, and here are found the demi-dolmens, which may be unfinished or imperfect, or perhaps so constructed by way of economising time and labour. The demi-dolmen at Kerlant, surmounted by a cross, Mr. Ferguson asserts to be a Christian monument. The rocking-stones, or *pierres tremblantes*, he supposes to be merely natural phenomena.

Carnac, the most remarkable megalithic group in the world, consists of two separate alignments, or great stone rows, the first that of Carnac, extending for nearly two miles in a direction nearly east and west; the second that of Erdeven, two and a half miles from Carnac, and extending a mile in length. There is a third but smaller group at St. Barbe, a mile and a half south of Erdeven, and many dolmens and tumuli are scattered over the plain. The Carnac monument stones measure from three to thirteen feet

in height, and are in no instance hewn or sculptured. They are divided into three avenues — Kerlescant, Kermario and Le Maenec—the remaining avenues of Erdeven and St. Barbe being inferior both in size and number. Pottery, polished celts of jade and tribolite, pendents in jasper or turquoise, some beautiful gold ornaments, have been found in some of the tumuli; the celts belonging to what antiquarians called the Polished Stone Period. Carnac and Lokmariaker Mr. Ferguson supposes to be the first a battle-field and cemetery, the last a cemetery only. At Lokmariaker the dolmens are sculptured with mysterious cyphers, besides rude figures of boats, hatchets, &c. About the great fallen obelisk, of course, our author differs from other authorities. This stupendous monolith, measuring 64 feet in length and 13 feet across, he supposes to be two columns and not one. To all these monuments is assigned a post-Roman date. Just as Stonehenge is regarded as commemorative of the great Arthurian battle, the 'stone array' of Carnac is set down as a trophy of some great battle or campaign in the Arthurian age, that is to say, between 380 and 550 A.D. This might be the battle between Maximus and Gratian, which destroyed the Roman power in Gaul, but more probably that between Grallon—the King Arthur of Breton legend—and the Roman consul Liberius, or the Norman pirates.

Such are the theories enounced in this volume, theories which we need not illustrate by further quotations from the interesting chapters on the rude stone monuments of Spain, Algeria, India, and other countries. In Algeria there are many thousand dolmens,

none of which were noticed by travellers before the year 1859, when an English traveller, Mr. Rhind, read a paper on the 'Ortholithic Remains in North Africa' before the Society of Antiquaries. Since that time much attention has been bestowed upon the subject, and ample accounts published by English and French writers. According to Mr. Ferguson's theory, the bulk of these North African dolmens are subsequent to the Christian era, and some might even extend to the times of the crusades. But it is in India that rude stone monuments are found in greater abundance even than in Europe, and the chapter on India is one of the most interesting of the book.

It is in the Khassia Hills, situated between the valley of Assam and the plains of Sylhet, that rude stone monuments are found in greater numbers than, perhaps, in any other portion of the globe. These are strikingly like those found in Europe. Many of these stones have been erected within the last few years, and are erected in honour of recovery from illness, in memory of the dead, and as gravestones, above the urns containing the ashes of the deceased. Here is an argument in favour of Mr. Ferguson's theory. This erecting of rude stone monuments goes on in the presence of and in immediate contact with a higher state of civilization. They may generally be divided into tumuli and dolmens. To sum up Mr. Ferguson's conclusion with regard to the rude stone monuments of the old world—The dolmen-builders of Europe were certainly not Aryan. Most probably they were not Celts, but descendants of an old pre-Celtic people not exterminated by the more active and progressive

Celts till a very recent period. It was the uncivilised ancestral-worshipping races of Europe who first borrowed from the Roman the idea of using stones to adorn the monuments of the dead. No stone monument like that of Gavr' Innis in Brittany, and Lough Crew in Ireland, have made out their claim to an antiquity of more than two centuries before the Christian era. The dolmen-building race, according to Mr. Ferguson's theory is a race with Turanian blood in its veins. 'Honour to the dead and propitiation to the spirits of the departed seem to have been the two leading ideas that both in the East and West gave rise to the erection of these hitherto mysterious structures which are found numerously scattered over the face of the old world.'

CHAPTER XVII.

AN AUTUMN TRIP IN BRITTANY—*continued.*

II. FINISTÈRE.

THE journey from Hennebont to Quimper lies through what has been called the Arcadia of Brittany; and well may a Breton author, describing its swift streams, delicious valleys, and pine-clad heights, say that here the traveller's restlessness vanishes, and that he feels no desire to pursue his journey, but rather to rest amid the murmuring woods and rushing waters. Nor are the towns less charming than the country. Quimper is delicious: its graceful cathedral rising from the midst of the picturesque market-place, its pleasant walk by the river side, its stately amphitheatre of wooded hills, its cheery people and graceful, piquant costumes—everything captivates the stranger, and helps to make him linger on his way. Then, as far as material comforts go, the high roads of Europe possess no more comfortable inn than the hotel (de l'Epée) whither my lucky stars directed me. Splendour is not here, nor luxury; but the best of beds, good food, and, instead of that unpoetic and often insupportable creature, the waiter in swallow-tail coat, you have charming maidens in costumes worthy

of Vandyke to wait upon you. The prices, too, are always moderate; so that when you leave Quimper and other delightfully genial old-world Breton towns, there is no occasion for ill-temper or loss of patience over the bill, and you shake hands with your host and hostess as if parting from old friends. Brittany, unsophisticated in all things, is none the less so in respect to foreigners, who may travel from one end to the other without having to grumble at their landlords' charges. It was late in October when I reached Quimper, to find soft, bright, golden autumn weather, which set off to the best advantage its cheerful streets and gracious *entourage*. Quimper—in Breton, Kemper—the Corisopitum of the Romans, and the former capital of ancient Cornouaille, has a history which its native historians date from Troy! A certain Trojan refugee, Corineus, is said by Breton chroniclers to have founded it; but, from the time when myth ends and fact begins, Quimper yields to few other Breton towns in interest. La Fontaine has given it a reputation which it does not seem to deserve—having produced a number of distinguished men.

C'était à la campagne,
Près d'un certain canton de la Basse Bretagne,
Appelé Quimper Corentin,
On sait assez que le destin
Adresse là les gens quand il veut qu'on enrage,
Dieu nous préserve du voyage!

The Quimper of legend and romance has been so often and so well described by French authors that it would be presumption in me to enter upon it here. Every inch of ground in the Breton Cornouaille is

consecrated to some family hero, fairy, or saint; and there is no more entertaining study than the popular stories, songs, and legends preserved for us by Villemarqué, Emile Souvestre, Pol de Courcy, and other Breton writers, to whom the taste has been a labour of love. Emile Souvestre—who wrote down his 'Mille et une Nuits de la Bretagne,' as he heard them from the lips of the people, sitting by the sabotiers' wood fire, joining with youths and maidens in the village festival, or traversing the forest in the company of pedlars and poachers—is the best companion one can have on a journey through Brittany. When the day's expedition is over, and the logs blaze on the hearth, the traveller should bring out those exquisitely naïve, witty, pathetic, and glowing narratives which more than any other reading will enable him to realise the poetry abounding in this 'antique land.' Quimper, for example, the ancient and noble capital of the Armorican Cornwall, is closely connected with the history of the Round Table. King Grallon, who figures in its chronicles as Galan, was hunting with his attendants one day, when he came here and was miraculously fed by Saint Corentin. God had given the saint a little fish, which provided him with his daily nourishment in the following fashion: Every morning it swam to the borders of the saint's fountain, who cut off a piece sufficient for his daily meal, then threw it back into the water, whereupon it was made whole again. This little fish miraculously fed the King of Cornouaille and all his attendants, who were by these means converted to Christianity. King Grallon lived at the famous Ville d'Is, built in the

Bay of Douarnenez, which Breton chroniclers affirm gave the name to Paris—Par-is ; that is to say, the equal of Is. The Ville d'Is was built of gold and silver and marble ; and, though the very existence of King Grallon and his capital—destroyed, like the ancient Cities of the Plain, for its sins—is mythical, it is certain that a mighty city did exist in ancient times near its supposed site. In 1586 unmistakable traces of buildings and broken sarcophagi were found embedded in the sand, or lying under the tide, like the relics of the town of Julia Cæsarea in Algeria, which, in calm weather, may be seen through the transparent water.

Nor is the modern history of Quimper less interesting than the fabulous and the mediæval ; but, leaving all this in the hands of more competent writers, I will describe the Quimper of to-day. Travellers will not easily forget their first dinner, and the poetry bestowed upon this meal by the bewitching costume of the attendant maidens. It is impossible to describe all the costumes one meets in Brittany, especially that of Quimper, which Puritan, Quakerish, Vandykeish, all in one, and more captivating than any, yet in words would appear cold. The great charm of these Breton dresses—made principally of the softest, most durable black stuff or dark blue cloth, the finest cambric and embroidery, and the richest of braid as trimming, if trimming be used—consists in their simplicity and appropriateness. A good deal is certainly done for ornament ; but it is always ornament of the right kind, and appears to belong to the dress as naturally as the ear belongs to the head, or the eyebrow to the

eye. But at the table-d'hôte dinner (which, for variety of fish, flesh, and fowl, and excellent cooking, would put that of many a fine Paris or London hotel to shame) we only saw one of the many costumes of Cornouaille; and all travellers, especially artists, should stay some time here.

Next day I was up betimes, and at seven o'clock started, in what by courtesy was called a carriage, for Pont l'Abbé and Penmarch. Here I would caution all those who follow in my steps to see the vehicle beforehand in which they propose a long day's drive, Otherwise they may find, as I did, that it is a wretched affair, with a seat scarcely broader than a knife-blade. no springs worth mentioning, and so contrived and, driven as to give you a succession of bumps, jerks, and bruises all the way, with an extra amount when a bit of bad road had to be got over. I had literally to hold on upon these occasions, and was knocked up for days after. The day was fresh and glowing, and the drive from Quimper to Pont l'Abbé thoroughly to be enjoyed, in spite of these drawbacks. The scenery was Welsh and Cornish mixed, the first part of the way. Sunny green hills, pine-clothed ridges, wide sweeps of golden gorse, hanging woods with thatched homesteads amid the yellowing trees, were gradually exchanged for a wild, open, barren stretch of moorland, patches of faded fern and heather alone breaking the monotony of sombre green and brown. My driver, a handsome young fellow with dark curls and ivory teeth, endeavoured to beguile the tedium of the way, as these Breton drivers always do, with anecdote and information. He told me that he

was on duty in Paris during the siege, and for months slept on the ground. 'We had nothing to eat and nothing to wear,' he said, 'whilst our officers were amusing themselves in the cafés; but that was nothing to what happened after, when we were called upon to shoot our brothers in the streets of Paris. I saw men, women, and children driven into *brasseries*, and shot down like wild beasts. Ah! it is a good thing to have peace, and to be among one's own people again.' He had served his five years, and had resumed his former occupation, looking as contented as possible in blouse and sabots, into which his bare feet were thrust, encased with straw. There can be no doubt that the terrible war of 1870-71 has educated the people, and destroyed the Napoleonic idea as nothing else could have done. From the remotest hamlets of France the peasants were despatched to the great cities and frontiers, where of course they saw with their own eyes all the ills that Bonapartism had brought on the country. This young fellow doubtless entertained quite opposite opinions about 'L'Empire et la Gloire' before these cruel experiences he described with such simple pathos.

Pont l'Abbé is a quaint little town—clean, quiet, and mediæval. Like Plougastel, the Île de Batz—to be described by-and-by—and other isolated seafaring communities in Brittany, it has retained from time immemorial costumes and customs of its own. You hardly find the same uniqueness and isolation anywhere else, or at least not in the same degree. At Pont l'Abbé, for instance, you cannot help fancying that the clock of time has stopped, and that here

people are still living in the middle ages. The only link connecting it with the modern world of railways and newspapers is the diligence, which comes lumbering up the grass-grown street at a snail's pace once a day, whilst very little that can be called activity reigns on its sleepy quays. Pont l'Abbé is a port, and vessels from Nantes, laden with corn, had just arrived, but everything seemed done in a drowse; and whilst in great American cities men wear out before they have reached middle life, here they might surely reach a hundred, without feeling worn out even then. The town is pleasant to the eye, with its whitewashed houses and black and grey facings, pent-house roofs, and dormer windows. Some are built of stone, and have quaint carvings; and the old château, now turned into a gendarmerie, would make a good sketch. The church is curious, and consists of a nave and one side aisle only, the chancel end entirely filled with beautiful old stained glass. The roof is painted sky-blue —a common occurrence in Finistère—and the slender pillars separating aisle from nave have a pretty effect. There is much quaint wooden carving here; but the chief feature of the church is the great richness and variety of the stained glass. Behind the church, and approached through a well-kept flower and vegetable garden, full of flowers even now, are the exquisite cloisters of the once flourishing Carmelite convent—among the most picturesque ecclesiastical remains of Brittany, and to my thinking as beautiful, though on a smaller scale, as the cloisters of San Zenone at Verona. The artist and lover of architecture may be quite sure of finding ample material for study in

Finistère. In the most out-of-the-way old-world spot is invariably to be found some interesting church, ruin, or relic; but of course any lengthened descriptions of all these would be supererogatory here, even if space permitted.

At the table d'hôte breakfast we were waited upon by an apple-cheeked, blue-eyed lassie in the gay costume of the district, the most striking feature of which is the head-dress, a padded cap of scarlet or crimson cloth, bordered with gold, silver, or silk braid, and covering only the back of the head, the hair being brought from underneath, brushed over, and fastened at the top. This coiffe, in conjunction with sky-blue vest, quaintly cut and trimmed, and blue and green petticoat, showing an under-border of orange, makes up one of the gayest and naïvest costumes of Brittany. The men—whom, however, I did not see to advantage, till on market-day and Sunday, at Quimper (travellers should always look out that their Sundays and market-days are judiciously spent !)—wear a dress no less fanciful, chiefly notable for the vests or waistcoats of different sizes, worn one over the other, all gay and richly embroidered, sometimes with mottoes. But it is only on high days and holidays that costume is to be seen at its best, even the poorest then turning out neat and trim. After a breakfast which would have satisfied a Roman epicure, and for which was charged the modest sum of two francs, I started for Penmarch. The weather, which had been clouded over for a time, brightened, and for the rest of the day we had a warm west wind, driving light rain clouds across a pale blue sky, with breaks of sunshine, and occasional

rainbows, and rain drifting down on the distant fields. The scenery grew wilder and wilder; we had left hills and woods behind, and were now in a wide, dreary, monotonous plain, only broken by occasional farmsteads, or solitary dolmen and menhir rising with weird effect from amid brown waste or rudely-tilled fields.

As we drew near, the stately church of the once flourishing city of Penmarch loomed in the distance. More like a château than a church, with its fantastic congeries of towers and turrets, this and the neighbouring ruin of St. Guenolé, with a scattered population of two thousand inhabitants, are all that now remain of what in the sixteenth century was a large and busy maritime town, rivalling in importance Nantes itself, able to send three thousand archers to the fight, and possessing seven hundred fishing-vessels. The dukes of Brittany held it to be one of the richest communities in their duchy, and it was not till the discovery of the great cod fisheries of America that its prosperity declined. The name of Penmark is found in Wales. Now nothing can be drearier or more dead-alive than these village streets, where you meet no one but wild-looking, shaggy peasants, with broad-brimmed hats slouched over their heads, carting away sea-weed, and unkempt, unwashed children, who gaze at the stranger in amazement. When we approach the sea, which for miles before had glinted and gleamed above the dips in the sombre marsh around us, the wind blew terrifically, and we heard the roar of the waves beating furiously against the rock. Three wild little natives take charge of the horse

whilst we alight, and my guide leads me to the edge of the steep, storm-beaten promontory, along which we wander, now climbing, now descending the masses of rock, heaped together, with many a fault, as geologists would say; now piled one on the top of the other, as carelessly as the dolmens; now forming shelves and staircases, only to be reached on hands and knees; now a rocky rampart, steep and unapproachable, against which the blue waves dash almost tempestuously even on this mild autumn day. The distant sea was calm almost as a lake, yet columns of spray were sent up from the purple depths below us with a deep continuous murmur. What a spectacle is here on a wild wintry day! An inscription, cut in the rock, tells how five pleasure-seekers, a mother and four children, imprudently lunching on the point of the *tête de cheval*, as this promontory is called, were swept suddenly by one huge wave into the gulph below. This happened in the summer time, and only three or four years ago. Two of the bodies alone were recovered. The precipitous sea-walls, stretching on either side, remind one of the Land's End; but colour, outline, and general features are here sterner, stranger, more grandiose. The rich, intense colouring of the Cornish sea and rock add romance and effect to the picture, but take away from the rugged grandeur, here attaining a point beyond which imagination cannot go. Travellers, however, should be pedestrians, and have weeks, not days, at their disposal, in order to realise what the coast scenery of Brittany is like. Guide-books mention no inn at Penmarch; but the little Hôtel des Voyageurs, at Pont l'Abbé, looks

quite delightful, and the intermediate distance is nothing to a fair walker.

In spite of all the vandalism which has swept, and alas! still sweeps over Brittany—that '*vieille druidesse baptisée par St. Pol*,' as says Émile Souvestre—wonderful treasures, archæological, architectural, and artistic, are still found in out-of-the-way places. No wayside church in Finistère should be deemed unworthy of a visit therefore, no matter how unattractive its exterior. In the imposing church of St. Nonna, the parish church of Penmarch, is some rich old stained glass and quaint carving. The outside, too, is well worth inspection. Each chapel has a separate roof, so that from the central rib branch out six little gables on each side with odd effect. It is disfigured by the usual hideous covered bier, painted black, and ornamented with death's heads and cross-bones in white.

My young driver, who had proved an instructive and entertaining companion on the way out, drowsed as we drove home in the misty rain and gathering twilight: but the good little Breton horse took no unworthy advantage of his master's weakness, and we reached home safely in good time.

Next day was market-day. It was touching to hear the clattering of sabots on the cathedral pavement, and see, one after another, some rough-looking, long-haired peasant-farmers or market-women deposit their huge baskets on the floor, and, meekly kneeling, pray réverently to their favourite saint. There is evidently fervent piety here, in spite of what I heard the other day from a landed proprietor of La Vendée. 'The French peasants are no longer what they were,'

he said to me. 'The Vendeans are now as ardent Republicans as before they were Royalists, and they distrust and dislike the priests.' But in Brittany changes work slowly, and nowhere else do you see so many priests, nuns, churches, and religious institutions. The market-place was an animating sight. So crowded was it with vendors of eggs, poultry, butter, vegetables, flour, fish, &c., that I could hardly get from one end to the other. Corn, flour, and other country produce are here brought to market and sold in small quantities, much talking and banter going on all the time. Anything less like an English market-day cannot be conceived. Here were costumes from all parts; the blue vests and jackets of the men, braided with gold, blue trousers, and broad felt hats with hanging streamers, predominating. Some of the women wore high, coal scuttle-shaped caps of white muslin, with flying ends, pretty ruffs round the neck, breast-plates bordered with gold braid, black dresses, white chemisettes, and gay violet, red, or even orange aprons. The true Breton *breek* or *brogue* is getting rarer and rarer, and is seldom seen except on the very old men; but it will be long before uniformity in costume reigns here.

Many articles of wearing apparel, notably those gaily embroidered vests both of men and women, were exposed for sale in the square behind the cathedral. Of sabots there was a goodly display; also of those comfortable and even elegant white flannel hoods worn by the women here in bad weather. The younger women wore the prettiest semi-Elizabethan frills, so arranged as to be very high and full at the

back, and displaying the front of the throat. Quimper is noted for its pottery; and a gayer display cannot be imagined than the piles of plates and dishes, all painted by hand, with naïve designs of birds and flowers in bright colours. These are sold at a penny or twopence apiece, yet a skilful artist may gain five francs a day by this rustic art. When a shower of rain came on, red, blue, and green umbrellas were spread, the women put on cloaks and hoods, the men coats of sheep or goat skin, and business went on as usual.

There is a museum at Quimper, containing some fine prints and engravings, many curious mediæval relics, such as the *dîme*—that stone measure which wrung the very life-blood out of the peasantry under the *ancien régime*. There is also a picture-gallery, possessing, amid many poor pictures and copies, some fair examples of modern French art, and one or two Vandyke and Rembrandt portraits that look genuine. Several young painters of merit are natives of Quimper; and one, Van D'Argent, has just embellished the side chapels of the cathedral with very brilliant and poetic frescoes.

The cathedral, both without and within, is as elegant and pleasing as any in Brittany, if not so interesting as some from an architectural point of view. The eye reposes gratefully on every part; and, whether seen from near or afar, its stately spires, light yet solid flying buttresses, and graceful proportions, leave no room for criticism. It is, I believe, the largest church in Brittany; and though some purists in architecture dismiss it coldly, to my thinking it

is really beautiful. One singularity all will notice. In accordance with a pious fancy, the architect wished to symbolise that attitude of the dying Saviour described by St. John: 'And He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.' Accordingly, the line of the chancel inclines from that of the nave, so that, looking from the centre of the church, you see a decided curve in the rib of the ceiling. This wave-like bend by no means offends the eye, but rather fascinates, whether seen from without or within. There is no modern trumpery in Quimper Cathedral, the beauty of the coloured windows, especially of the clerestory, the delicate sculpture of the triforium, the lightness and cheerfulness and grace of the structure as a whole, delight more than many a more imposing and elaborate interior. Here, as everywhere else, the hand of the despoiler has fallen heavily, many pictures, carvings, and statues having been destroyed during the Revolution. But the building itself was not touched, and its outward appearance has been much beautified by the graceful spires lately built, under the direction of M. Viollet Le Duc, with the fruits of a penny subscription.

The only things to offend good taste here are the sermons. I attended mass one morning, and the following is the substance of a sermon preached to a large and attentive congregation, mostly of working men and women: 'There are three duties,' said the preacher, 'imposed by the Church on the faithful: 1stly, to confess at least once a year; 2ndly, to confess in one's own parish; 3rdly, to confess within the fifteen days of Easter.' The omission of the first of

these sins is regarded by the Church as a sin of such gravity that it is condemned to be punished by the withholding of Christian burial. Not one word — throughout a long discourse preached to a simple, devout, care-worn, peasant folk—of moral teaching, religious counsel, or brotherly love. The Church's ordinances, the Church's laws, the Church's wrath—that was all!

Quimper is picturesque, gracious, gay. The gable-ends and dormers of its quaint old houses make delicious light and shadow; the clear-flowing river, bordered with stately elms and crested by a lofty wooded hill, offers a variety of walks; its churches and museums, and, lastly, handsome genial people, will entice many a traveller to prolong his stay here. I had come with anticipations which were more than realised, and I went away with hearty regret.

All the way from Quimper to Brest we picked up conscripts, a new levy having just been made. Women were weeping at every station, and no one could talk of anything but 'Les Conscrits! les Conscrits!' The lads—for few of them could be called men—had evidently been treated to a little more wine than was good for them, and screamed, sang, and chattered at the tops of their voices. They were mostly of the peasant class, in blouses and sabots—honest-looking lads enough, but rough and uncouth as could be. Whatever may be said against conscription, there can be no doubt that it educates the French peasant, and does more than anything else to sharpen his wits and open his eyes to those deadly enemies of his country, the Napoleonic idea and Clericalism. It is a pity that

nothing answering to conscription offers itself to the women here, who, in Brittany and the Loire Inférieure, are wofully ignorant in every way. A friend of mine who has kept house in Nantes for more than twenty years, paying maximum wages, assures me that she has hardly ever had a servant who could read or write. The ignorance of domestic servants is not to be conceived by strangers. It strikes one as a painful experience in French domestic life, when a well-dressed maid brings you a letter, asking 'Est-ce pour Madame?' — not being able to decipher the address. Another friend, when engaging a little nursemaid, tried to explain that she must address her, according to polite usage, in the third person singular. When the little maid had quitted the parlour, she said to the cook, who was henceforth to be her fellow-servant, 'Qu'est-ce que Madame veut dire? La troisième personne du singulier! Je n'en comprends rien du tout. M. le Curé m'a souvent parlé du Saint Père, du Saint Esprit, et du Jésus Christ, mais de la troisième personne du singulier, jamais!' This is one story out of legion. Convents and convent schools abound; the education of all classes may be said to be in the hands of the priests and the nuns; yet statistically Brittany stands lower than any other with regard to primary instruction.

The approach to Brest is exceedingly beautiful. On October 23 the warm colouring of sea and sky was quite Italian; and the wide bay, with the violet mountains rising on either side; the turquoise sea opening beyond, calm as a lake; the shining white city surrounded by public gardens, recalled many a

recollection of Italy and the South. Here the gloom and rugged grandeur of Finistère have vanished, and the calmness and brightness of the scene are in striking contrast with the savage beauty I had lately beheld at Penmarch.

Brest, in spite of these natural graces, has a bad name. No guide-book has a good word to say for the hotels, and the following character is assigned to the Brestois by a French writer: 'All the inhabitants of Brest live at the expense of Government; which is true not only of officials but merchants, since business is almost exclusively confined to the equipment of the navy. Thus the characteristic of the Brestois is to have no character at all, and to greet with the same enthusiasm the rise or fall of all the Governments that have succeeded each other in France during the last century.'

There is only one thing to see at Brest—and this cannot be seen—namely, the naval docks, which, since the war of 1870-71, are inaccessible to all English travellers unprovided with a special permission from Lord Lyons. This, of course, travellers do not know till they arrive, when it is too late to take the necessary steps to procure it. Most travellers will, however, have made the journey to Brest, like myself, not to see the naval docks, but the curious population of Plougastel and Saint Pol de Léon, descriptions of which I must defer to another chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AUTUMN TRIP IN BRITTANY—*continued.*

III. MORE OF FINISTÈRE.

IT is worth while to make the journey to Brest from Nantes—I am almost tempted to say from England—for the sake of spending a day at Plougastel alone. Of all the isolated sea-coast populations found in Brittany, and they are numerous, that of Plougastel is the most striking and curious. Let no one, therefore, who has come thus far, be deterred from an excursion not sufficiently insisted upon by guide-books, and easy enough in fair weather. If the weather is wet—and more rain is said to fall in Finistère than in any other part of France—wait; if you are bored to death in your hotel, put up with it; if your time is limited, give up everything else, but on no account leave Brest without having seen Plougastel.

A word about its history to begin with. From time immemorial the Phrygian caps of the men, and the head-dress of the women, resembling that of the Egyptian goddess Isis, have seemed to warrant the tradition of their Eastern origin, handed down by ancient writers. The country folks in these parts call them 'Les Galiléans,' and they have always remained

a colony apart like the Jews, marrying amongst each other only, and keeping up old costume and habits. Some historians have traced their origin to that migration of Asiatic tribes into Western Europe, spoken of by Diodorus Siculus and other old writers; and, upon the occasion of the recent Science Congress at Nantes, the subject was fully entered upon during a discussion upon the ethnology of Western France. Ancient historians all agree upon one point, namely, that certain migrations from the region of the Troad towards this part of Europe did take place; some say that the Christians driven out of Egypt settled at Loctudy, near Quimper, though no evidence bears out the suggestion; whereas, in some parts of Brittany, notably Plougastel, the inhabitants, fancifully or otherwise, do recall by their dress an Asiatic descent. The men wear the Phrygian cap, the women a head-dress with flowing lappets, like those of Isis and the Egyptian priestesses; and though they go to mass, and the famous Quinipily Venus—always supposed to be of Egyptian origin—is no longer worshipped with mystic rites, there is little doubt that their Catholicism is a mere whitewash, as at the Île de Batz, afterwards to be described. The subject of ethnology, however—when such a mixture of populations has to be handled as that of Brittany – is inexhaustible, and I merely hold up one of the threads of the many tangled skeins as an example of the rest. Plougastel is not the only isolated little colony we have seen, and more were to be met with before my round of travel was over.

The weather, which had been rainy and windy on

my arrival at Brest, cleared up at last as if on purpose to enable me to see Plougastel. October 28 could hardly have been brighter, balmier, and more glowing in Algeria or Southern Europe, and in neither would you find a lovelier sight than the harbour of Brest, as you drive towards Plougastel. Before you is a beautiful little bay, calm, blue, and sunny, shut in by rocks of fantastic shape and distant purple mountains—the Arez chain no Breton can be brought to call hills—behind a wide view of the open sea, with green hills sloping to the shore. Ships at anchor, and fishing-boats were gliding about airily as butterflies, whilst the road, bordered with lofty trees still in full leafage, made a framework of green through which we got one glimpse after another of this calm, lovely scene. Arrived at the ferry, we put up the horses, and, after waiting an hour, crossed with a large number of country folks going to the fair. Some were from Plougastel; the women in their gay, naïve and most becoming attire, the men in red Phrygian caps, blue vests and trousers, and crimson sashes; their dark curly locks, and often cunning or half-savage looks, and olive complexions, reminded me of Albanians. The cast of countenance is as unlike the Breton as can be, the latter being open, simple and genial, not untinctured with proud reserve and melancholy.

A mile or so of winding road, bordered with trees, and ascending sharply, with wild volcanic rocks on either side, leads to the unattractive little town of Plougastel. The houses are dark and dirty, the streets narrow and ill-paved, and to-day so blocked with pigs, cows, calves, sheep, and pigs, and their

owners, that it was difficult to get along. The ordinary dress of the people was bright and picturesque; but on a sudden my guide cried out, 'See that lad so strangely dressed; let us go and ask him from what country he comes.' The boy, in scarlet trousers, green jacket, and broad hat with coloured streamers, looked as gay as a merry Andrew, yet rather to be compared to those gorgeous figures we admire so much in the streets of Cairo and Algeria, was no stranger, but a wedding-guest; and his mother, who was also very becomingly and gaily attired, offered to take us to see the two brides, for it was a double wedding that had taken place that morning! Two brides, after all I had heard about the gala costume of Plougastel, was good fortune indeed; and I joyfully followed our gorgeously-attired guides to a little inn where the wedding guests were assembled. It was a very dirty little inn indeed, and I preferred to wait outside rather than accept the courteous invitation to enter. Meanwhile we chatted as well as we could, through the medium of my guide, no one else being able to speak a word of French. I complimented the women—for two or three had gathered round me—on the elegance of their dress, and said in England there was nothing to be seen so pretty, whereupon one said—'But you have a Queen in England,' and they could not be brought to believe that their costume could be compared to that of the Queen of La Grande Bretagne. 'You can't speak Breton!' they said, with as much surprise as we might ask of our Scotch or Welsh neighbours; but it most of all amused and astonished them that an English

lady could find anything worth seeing at Plougastel. All on a sudden, out they trooped—brides, bride-grooms, and wedding-guests; and surely no ceremonies in the olden time, court pageantry old or new, or masquerades at a Roman carnival, made up so strange and gay a spectacle. The dingy little street blazed with the dazzling colours, which, whilst bright as dyes could make them, and belonging to garments of fancifullest shape, were yet without a shade of glaring vulgarity or grotesqueness.

The two brides, who were young, fresh-coloured and pretty, were dressed exactly alike; and as the gala costume of Plougastel is quite the most curious in Brittany, I will try to describe it accurately. They wore, then, the Egyptian coiffe before mentioned, the principal feature of which is the long side lappet, and it is hardly necessary to say of fine cambric; exquisitely piquant little jackets of brighter and softest moss-coloured gold green, and of the daintiest shape, showing embroidered under-vest of dark blue cloth, white sleeves and chemisette; with indescribable arrangements of skirts and petticoats, so worn as to show different-coloured under-skirts red above and yellow below, the prevailing colour being violet; gay red and gold morocco slippers were worn under the wooden sabots; and sleeves, vest, and skirt were all elaborately and tastefully trimmed with silk and gold braid. The dress of the elder women was soberer, petticoat and vest being of rich dark violet cloth, with orange and crimson border, dark green vest with open sleeves, and large white collar covering the front of the chest like a corslet. And now for the men. They

wore a broad-brimmed black felt hat, perhaps three-quarters of a yard in diameter, trimmed with braids of all colours, and tasselled ends ; jackets of the same coloured green as that of the brides, embroidered red, brown, yellow, or blue, as the case might be ; crimson waist-sashes and full black almost Turkish trousers ; the latter feature in this costume being an innovation. Even in Plougastel the tendency of costume is to modification, and in future we may not long have the opportunity of seeing the rustic pageant I have endeavoured to describe accurately. The wedding feast was to take place at two o'clock, and meantime the guests were amusing themselves with gossip here and there. One of the bridegrooms was a tall, fine, handsome young fellow, but only the women made friends with me ; and before taking leave, I was compelled to enter the dirty little inn and drink the health of the newly-married couples in very nasty wine. These people are said to be rich and rough in their ways, and behindhand, even in Brittany, as far as comforts and decencies go. They are said even to eat, like the Arabs, out of one dish ; and after seeing the dingy place in which this superb assemblage—for such a term is not too strong to apply to the finest cloth, the daintiest linen and the richest braid they wore—I could believe anything.

There is only one thing to see at Plougastel besides the costume ; namely, the curious old Calvary, which in its way is unique, in this the land of uniqueness. The crucified Saviour is in the midst, with the two thieves on either side ; and below, on various levels and stages, are represented in stone the events of the Life and Passion. The figures—there are two hundred

in all—are curiously life-like, odd and homely. In the entry into Jerusalem, Jesus Christ is preceded by Breton peasants in mediæval costumes, with the old musical instruments of Armorica, bagpipe, tambour and musette—the only ones now seen in the country; and there is much rude pathos in design and execution, as well as a considerable amount of artistic power. It is quite possible, as a writer on this subject, himself a Breton, says, that love of country rather than ignorance actuated this anachronism, just as another affirms that the Celtic language was that of our primitive forefathers, and that Adam and Eve spoke Breton in Paradise!

Above these dramatic arrays of statuettes all carved in the grey Kersanton granite so plentiful in Brittany, the three crucifixes stand out boldly. Those of the Saviour and the good thief are surmounted by angels, that of the wicked thief with a winged demon. All kinds of fanciful symbolisation are used to heighten the effect, and nothing but a series of photographs would give an accurate idea of this primitive and interesting work of mediæval art. Of all the Calvaries in Brittany this is the most curious and elaborate, and on no account to be missed. The date assigned to it is 1602, which seems hardly to warrant the title of mediæval; only, as some one has said, 'The middle ages lasted longer in Brittany than elsewhere'—an assertion borne out by the history of its ecclesiastical architecture throughout the country. There are several churches near Plougastel worth seeing; but a short autumn day did not admit of this, as much time is lost in waiting for the ferry-boat. The fair, too, was a

curious sight, but spoiled by the atrocious treatment of the animals. Never shall I forget what a spectacle was presented in the open market-place and at the ferry. Lying on the ground like bunches of carrots, tied by the four feet in such a manner that they could not stir, tortured in a hundred ways by the boys who had charge of them, were hundreds of calves, a few days old only, half dead with hunger and ill-treatment; whilst pigs, cows, and sheep were hardly better served. 'It is only good for eating,' said the nice-looking woman who had conducted me to the bridal party, when I remonstrated with her. Such brutality as I saw shown to those helpless little creatures, which were there in large numbers, I shall never remember without horror. When a market-cart came up, they were taken from the bottom and thrown out exactly as if they were bags of potatoes; it was the same at the landing-place of the ferry. So sickening was the sight that I was thankful to get away, and not a dozen weddings or Calvaries would have stopped me. Yet the little peninsula of Plougastel would deserve a much longer visit. Its scenery, mixed pastoral and savage, of which the walk to the ferry only affords a glimpse, is romantic in the extreme. The southern coast offers a fruitful soil, lightly covering the volcanic rocks, and delicious climate, and here are cultivated, in the open air, early strawberries, melons, green peas and other choice produce for the Brest markets; whilst on the north side is a mere rocky waste where sheep find but scanty herbage, and the bustard, sparrow-hawk, and grey crows build their nest. The population, 6,000 in number, possessing a commune of 4,628

hectares, is said to be rich, and consists half of fishermen, half of small farmers. Many varieties of shell-fish are found here, shrimps are abundant, and oyster-beds still exist in the neighbourhood ; indeed, the principal characteristic of Breton fare is the great variety of excellent fish—such a luxury in inland places. The shady winding lane leading down to the ferry reminded me of Devonshire, whilst the fantastic piles of rocks rising on either side resembled those of Tunbridge Wells, though on a far larger scale. It strikes a stranger oddly that this rustic homelike lane, not a mile long, should divide from the rest of the world a people utterly unique, historic, mysterious. The experience is certainly one of the most surprising of the many surprises that meet you in Brittany.

The fishermen and fisherwomen, for we saw many, have a look of extraordinary health and muscular power about them, and the Breton here sounds a strange and harsh jumble of uncouth sounds. The perpetual *ja, ja* recalls the *ja, ja* of the Germans, and other familiar gutturals greet the ear. The amount of talking got through by these people is astounding.

The afternoon was, if possible, more southern, glowing and delicious than the morning, and I walked on in advance of the carriage, looking back frequently at the lovely picture behind me—amethystine hills shutting in a clear blue bay, on the surface of which lay fishing-boats, with rich brown sails, motionless as 'painted ships upon a painted ocean.' It seemed hard to believe that the peace and poetry of such a scene should be spoiled by the barbarities I have just alluded to; and being in that frame of mind when it was

impossible to help making an effort, however Quixotic, on behalf of the oppressed, I said to myself when I saw a priest advancing towards me, 'Here is an opportunity; this is surely the curé of Plongartel. I will speak to the curé.' Advancing very politely and appealingly, I said to him in French, 'Monsieur le curé; I am an English traveller, and have just visited Plougastel. It is fair-day, and I assure you in all my travels, not even in Egypt or among the Arabs in Algeria, have I witnessed such reckless cruelty to animals. Preach to these poor people, M. le curé, on this subject. They will listen to you. Forbid them to commit this sin.' 'Madame,' answered the priest, a middle-aged, florid, and not ill-natured looking man, 'all that you say is true; these people are cruel to their animals, *and the law forbids it. Mais, pardon, ce n'est pas un péché.* It is no sin.' 'Not a sin, M. le curé,' I said, 'to torture the innocent animals that God has sent us to minister to our use and comfort?' But he stuck to his text, 'The law forbids it, but it is no sin;' and so I continued my way, thus moralising on the melancholy story. 'It is, then, no sin, Monsieur le curé, to break the laws when the priest has not made them. It is a sin, as your fellow-priest and fellow-moralist said the other day, not to confess once a year; not to confess within one's own parish; not to confess within the fortnight of Easter, because the priest ordains it; but to torture the innocent and the helpless, to brutalise oneself by a cowardly use of power, to be guilty of acts disgraceful to civilisation and humanity—this is no sin, even when forbidden by the laws of the country!'

Next day I started for Morlaix, the birthplace of that charming writer, Émile Souvestre, and of General Moreau, the indomitable adversary of Bonaparte, also of Albert le Grand, aptly called the Breton Froissart, the patient and romantic chronicler of the life, acts and death of Breton saints. His book is to be found in the public library of Nantes, and may be commended to all who are likely to live a hundred years, but otherwise a few extracts are preferable.

The bit of railway between Lauderneau and Laudivisiau is cut through scenery like the Tyrol. Jagged rocks, pine-clad heights, wide hills covered with the tarnished purple and faded gold of heather and gorse, all bright and glowing, despite a cold, grey sky and storms of rain, after a bright unclouded morning. There was every conceivable shade of red, yellow and green in these wooded ravines, sweeps of moor, deep-dipping valleys, with brawling mountain streams rushing through their midst. Over the dark western hills lay a bright band of dazzling gold, where the sun had set; all else was cold, grey, sombre.

Morlaix must be charming in summer time. The town lies in a narrow valley, amid which peep white villas with pleasant and beautiful effect. The general appearance of the town itself is an odd jumble of houses, ruins, churches, bridges, gardens, shut in by green walls. It is not, however, so much in the surroundings or *tout ensemble* of Morlaix—beautiful as it is with running waters, and hanging woods and terrace upon terrace of sunny sward—as in the town itself that the traveller's interest lies. No words can give

any idea of the picturesqueness of these narrow streets, noisy all day long with the clattering of sabots, and animated in a quiet, long-lived, dreamy sort of way. The houses are built with one story overlapping the other, so that the upper nearly meet, all embellished with stained wooden framework, and in some cases with stone cornices representing grinning demons, saints, bagpipe-players, or heraldic devices. The lower part is open in the daytime, and forms a kind of bazaar like those of the East, the head of the proprietor just peeping above the piles of bright-coloured cloth and other goods. The bright colours abound, lighting up the narrow dusty streets and dull autumn days; and the costume has a quaintness of its own, the women's being distinguished by a quaint cap hanging down on the back, something like the nightcaps worn by our grandfathers.

There was little to detain me at Morlaix, and the days were getting shorter and shorter; so I hastened on to St. Pol de Léon, 'the utmost limits of my farthest sail' in Finistère. The drive thither from Morlaix made me realise that I was approaching the Land's End, or Finis-terræ of France, which gives the name to this department. From my seat in the coupé of the rumbling diligence, crawling at a pace of two miles and a half an hour, I had a good view of the country we passed through. At first were seen monotonous stretches of heath and moorland, with occasional patches of fairly cultivated ground, farmsteads and châteaux standing in wide-stretching parks at some distance from the road. As we got farther on, the scene grew wilder and more solitary.

On either side lay dreary brown wastes, the white roads cutting through them at right angles now and then, and winding through the sombre heath and brushwood, but adding to the dreariness. Market-carts met us jogging slowly towards Morlaix, and everybody greets us, or rather the diligence, courteously, the men raising their hats, the women even stopping from their road-side clothes-washing to say 'Good day.' Beggars abound, and lie in wait for the diligence, springing out upon us whenever we stop. There is an open, independent and manly bearing look about the country folks which bears out their reputation for pride and dignified character.

The first impression of St. Pol de Léon stands alone amid my experiences of foreign travel. I can remember nothing so unique, so solemn, so melancholy, so majestic. Far off, rising statelily above wide brown plain and barren shore and silvery sea, you see the twin spires of St. Pol, near it, but towering far above the airy, glorious tower of the Creizker, so celebrated in Breton legend and song, and so deservedly the boast of the country of Léon. Slowly the distinctive features of the scene are made out, the little town clustered around the gracious cathedral, the gardens and fields stretching to the sea, and the Creizker, crowning all, its light yet solid spire, pierced with star-shaped openings, letting in the day. 'Were an angel to come from heaven,' writes a Breton author, 'he would alight on the Creizker before setting foot on Breton soil,' is one out of the hundreds of sayings about this masterpiece of architecture. The town itself is primitive, melancholy, antiquated. White-robed

nuns shuffle about, not even looking up at the diligence —the only link connecting St. Pol de Léon with the great world—stately-looking peasants, stalwart, dark-complexioned, and broad-built, dressed in black with broad purple waist-sashes, raise their hats to the driver gravely; toil-worn, weather-beaten women, in black dresses and white head-dresses, nod at us from their washing by the rivulet at their front doors. There is no more movement in this little mediæval town than in a plague-stricken city; no sound of wheels, no noise except the clattering of sabots on the unpaved streets; no gas to light the way, but lanterns slung across on ropes; no ladies and children walking in fashionable dress; only nuns and priests, and staid-looking country-folks with a Spanish look of haughtiness and about them a Spanish picturesqueness in their dress.

From my window in the hotel I have a strange, weird prospect, with some homely and cheerful features near at hand. Close underneath and stretching far back is a large fruit, flower, and vegetable garden, where a few splendid red lilies are still in blossom; fuchsias, also, with chrysanthemums in plenty, and birds singing on the bushes as if it were summer. It is four o'clock in the afternoon, yet so mild and soft is the air here that I sit with my windows open. The day has been grey, with a lustrousness in the purple clouds, which are just now burnished with a sunset glow, the rich ripe gold tinging dark blue sea and distant islets and low-lying hills. A group of dark stately sea-pines rises to the left, towering over all and breaking the monotony of wide-stretching

lines, at this moment the only gloomy feature of the scene, all else being tinted with delicate orange and purple. My hotel might be better, and certainly might be worse. The floor of my room is much like a granary floor in England, only grittier and dirtier; there are no bells, and the rats are gambolling in the wainscot, like a troop of school-children let out to play; but the bed is, as usual, exquisitely clean and comfortable, the bed-linen being of that excellent Breton homespun which never goes through the odious and unwholesome process, called in England 'mangling,' but being dried and well aired at the fire, is here only folded up before putting on the bed. We all know what dangers damp sheets are with us, and the inventor of the mangle has much to answer for; but in Brittany appearance is sacrificed to health, and you may rely upon the somewhat rough-looking bed-linen being as dry as sunshine can make it. The sea-shore here reminded me of Hastings sands at low water. There was a quiet glow upon the grey sands, blue grey water and dark hills receding on either side. It was inexpressibly quiet, dreamy, and lovely; close to the sea were women washing their linen, the gendarmes in sabots chatting, and children playing. Before me lay the mysterious little island called Île de Batz, purple in the gathering twilight, and far away on the sands were the lonely figures of shrimpers with their nets. Returning, the spires of St. Pol and the lofty Creizker, with its openings like stars peeping out of a dark night, stood out grandly from amid the wide-stretching half-Spanish, half-Lincolnshire landscapes. The in-

teriors, as I glanced at them on my homeward walk, look no cleaner than those of Morbihan. Hens and chickens live with the family, and the cow-house, if cow-house there be, opens on to the general apartment of the family. Admirable as are the Bretons in many respects, they have not yet learned how to make their houses attractive without and comfortable within, and you may look in vain for the well scrubbed floors, pretty gardens, and trim dressers of a Suffolk cottage.

Next morning was Sunday, and I awoke to the sound of the birds singing and bells chiming. The bright sunshine and soft air make it difficult to realise that we are in November. The monotony of the quiet streets is broken here on Sunday by the cathedral bells and the bustle of church-going and church-gossiping, for an extraordinary amount of talk goes on before and after service, diversified with hot coffee, chestnuts, cakes, and fruit, in which the vendors must do a considerable amount of business. Early in the morning crowds had gathered round the cathedral; the men scrupulously dressed in broad-brimmed felt hats with hanging streamers, short jackets, and ordinary trousers of fine black cloth; the former embroidered and showing an open waistcoat trimmed with many rows of buttons; and broad, many folded sashes round the waist, of deep purple or bright French merino; the women no less scrupulously and showily attired in black, only relieved by white mob-caps. As I drove to Roscoff we met numbers of pedestrians trudging towards St. Pol in time for mass, all saluting us with grave politeness. My driver, who could

speak scant French, and who carried his Sunday clothes with him to Roscoff, where he put them on, and went to church as smart as any, was a type of the Léonnais, reserved, dignified, courteous—a striking contrast to the gay and garrulous people of Quimper. We drove amid a succession of fertile fields and gardens, these artichoke and asparagus beds supplying the early London markets. The soil here is extraordinarily productive, and its produce, notably potatoes and early vegetables, are carried to all parts, the choicest being sent to England. Flower-gardens are found at Roscoff, a sleepy little port with a quaint old church, and an indescribable look of Cornwall about it. The air is so soft and warm that one wonders a great health resort has not sprung up here, where surely even sickly people might live to be centenarians—if they did not die of ennui. The church was so crowded that I could not find standing room; so finding a friend's friend at home, I had a long talk with him instead of listening to a sermon. He was a learned doctor, a scholar, and a musician, who, after travelling all over the world, had retired, with characteristic Breton love of country, to pursue his studies and his recreation at this aptly called Finis-terræ—world's end. 'You must cross over to the Île de Batz in time for vêpres, or afternoon service, and see the Druidesses,' he said. 'These people are quite unlike any other in Brittany, and well worth studying, only you want days instead of hours for that. They go to mass and are called Catholics, but their religion is still the purest Druidism. They are exceedingly courteous to strangers; but as they do not speak a word of French, it is a great draw-

back to intercourse. This courteousness and great affability characterises the Phœnician race, which they greatly resemble, and you must carefully examine their physiognomy at vespers this afternoon.' Many other interesting things the doctor told me about the Île de Batz and Roscoff, and their ways, and I was only sorry that time did not admit of a longer stay. In fine weather I am sure many weeks might profitably and agreeably be spent here. The hotel looked comfortable, the climate seems to be deliciously soft and mild, and the people have a frank, pleasant bearing, and an uncommon share of good looks, dark hair and eyes, rich complexion, and good features. It is rare to see an ugly face in these parts.

Whilst waiting for the mail-boat, which in its turn waited for the mails, I strolled down to the harbour, where are to be found in plenty those exquisite pearl oyster shells, sold largely in England, and many others equally pretty. Roscoff is resorted to for sea-bathing in summer, and its little port does considerable business with England in the way of fruit and vegetables. Two melancholy pages in English history are connected with it. Here Mary Queen of Scots landed when a child of five years old, on her way to Nantes, and founded a little chapel, now in ruins; and here the young Pretender fortunately escaped the pursuit of the English privateers after Culloden. The church, like many others in this part of Finistère and the Côtes du Nord, has a pagoda-like tower, whilst inside the sky-blue ceiling with ribs of vaulting picked out in red and gold, and in the chancel with gold stars, has a rich and fanciful effect. These

churches are much alike, and the curious ossuaries in the churchyards are characteristic of them.

The crossing to the Île du Batz, which looks inviting this sunny day, is a trifle, but at low tide, when you have to walk or rather wade for a quarter of a mile across the wet sands and rocks, it is not easy. To be on the sea on such a day was delicious, and the unclouded blue sky, deep purple waves, and burnt sienna coloured rocks, made up a glowing picture. In the little mail-boat were about a dozen passengers, all talking Breton as fast as they could. There was one of the so-called 'Druidesses,' or women of the Île of Batz, among them —very young, though she wore a wedding-ring—who now very modestly put on the shoes and stockings she had wisely taken off to get down to the boat. She was a pretty brunette, and her look of physical strength and animal spirits was delightful to see. Her dress was severely simple and inexpressibly dignified: dress of the softest, finest black French merino, made with a plain artistic skirt, scrupulously white linen under-vest, with embroidered collar and sleeves, and a hood of creamy white cashmere, so spotless, soft, and graceful that a duchess might have put it on to go to the opera. Arrived at the island, we saw crowds of women and children in this costume, and men, whose looks betokened their sea-faring life—all are sailors here, whilst the women cultivate the soil—hastening to vespers, the men loitering outside the church till the last moment, as is the fashion in English country places. Inside, the congregation presented so strange an appearance that it was difficult

to believe we were not assisting at some solemn ceremony, instead of an ordinary Sunday service. There was not a bit of colour in the church, except a gay baby's hood, the assemblage of black-robed white-hooded women, looking more like a concourse of nuns than ordinary country folks; and the black dress of the men, when they entered, did not relieve the monotony. The prevailing characteristic of this curious population of hardy sailors and no less hardy women farmers, seemed to me physical strength, courtesy, and animal spirits; but, of course, they require to be known. Many interesting experiences might doubtless be gathered by anyone versed in Breton, who should take up his abode here for a time.

My driver — who, as I have before mentioned, took his Sunday clothes with him to Roscoff, and put them on — came in to say a prayer or two, then went away. The devotion of the devout Bretons reaches its culminating point at this Land's End, and at St. Pol de Léon. Church-going seems the chief business of life with all classes.

The character of the people is, I should say, little changed since described so graphically by Émile Souvestre twenty-five years ago. The look of proud stolid resignation, recalling that of the Arabs, speaks of a temperament akin to them. When an earthquake happens in Algeria, or a famine, or a plague of locusts, the Arabs say, 'It is the will of Allah; Allah's will be done,' and, wrapping themselves up in their burnouses, await their fate without making an effort to avoid it. Thus it is with the Léonnais; and Émile Souvestre describes how, when in 1853, cholera was

decimating the population, he asked the parish priest what precautionary measures had been taken against the scourge, the latter led him, without a word, to the churchyard and pointed silently to twelve grave-pits dug in readiness to receive the dead!

In passive submission to the will of God, pastor and people awaited the issue of events, the disease spreading like wildfire in consequence. The poor people even rebelled against the dead bodies of the victims being buried in isolated churchyards instead of the parish cemetery. 'Isolated, exiled, separated from the graves of their fathers, they will neither hear the chanting at mass nor the prayers for the dead,' they said. 'The dead do not kill; death comes at the will of God.' The priests could not persuade them that the departed felt no longer the passions of the living, and would not suffer from such separation. Like his ancestors, the Breton of to-day believes as firmly in the existence after death as in that preceding it. The Gaul borrowed money to repay in another world. The Breton does not go so far, but he is none the less sure of a life beyond the grave as real, and, from his point of view, as human as the one familiar to him. This is a remnant of that Druidism so finely described by Jean Reybaud in his work on the 'Esprit de la Gaule.'

What can I say that is worth saying about the twin glories of St. Pol de Léon itself, the cathedral and the Creizker? Such full and admirable descriptions are to be found in other writers, that another line would be superfluous, and could not be original.

Perhaps the stranger's first impression on entering

the cathedral is one of disappointment. He will find there none of the gorgeousness which may have dazzled him at Burgos and Toledo, not even the sombre richness of Angers, or the lightness and lustrousness of Quimper. All here is cold, chaste, classic. That the interior has, however, greatly suffered under the hand of the restorer, may be gathered from a work of Émile Souvestre on Bretagne, written many years ago, in which he relates his dismay at finding, after two years' absence, the beautiful cathedral of St. Pol de Léon which he had left so sombre and mysterious, its arches of greenish Kersanton marble giving it the appearance of architecture in bronze, suddenly transformed by the hand of the whitewasher, till it looked like a newly done up refreshment room. It is the extreme beauty of its proportions and construction, rather than the richness of its decoration or its size, which makes St. Pol de Léon pre-eminent among the numerous beautiful old churches of Brittany. Many others are more curious and in some respects more interesting, but none—excepting, perhaps, Dol—so perfect; and the lovers of Gothic architecture who may undertake a long journey to see it will be amply repaid. It was finished in the Middle Ages, that is to say in the golden age of Gothic architecture—the nave, spires, and side-porch dating from the thirteenth, the rest from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Nor must the extraordinariness of its site be left out of consideration. Built close to the sea, and completely isolated from the bustling modern world by its position, nothing can be more striking than the approach to it from the distance, or the

mediæval quietude and quaintness of its grass-grown streets. The spire of the Creizker, which means centre of the town, and which has been called the pride of Brittany, is chiefly remarkable from without, the interior being small and without any especial features except the same symbolic curve of the nave, so conspicuous in Quimper cathedral. The spire and tower supporting it is a *tour de force* of architecture, resulting in an effect as striking as it is beautiful. It is 393 feet high, and though built of the dark greenish granite so plentiful in Brittany and so much used in building, is wonderfully light and graceful, whilst the open work letting in the light affords one of those happy surprises in which genius of all ages has delighted to indulge.

Both churches were as full as churches can be during service, and never for a moment empty, whilst outside the usual Sunday's quiet recreation and refreshment were going on—coffee-drinking, cake-eating, and much talk and gossip.

It was with real regret that I left St. Pol de Léon, my last halting-place in Finistère. Excepting the rats and the dirty floors, my hotel was comfortable, and the pleasant gardens at the back made it homelike. It was so warm, too, that I could enjoy sitting with open windows at five o'clock in the afternoon, when the twilight view of shore, sea, and distant islands was alternately glowing, dim, or weird. I felt too, that though I had seen much, much more I must leave unseen. Doubtless Finistère is greatly changed, and alas! diminished, from an archæological point of view since described forty years ago by a noble

Breton writer, the Chevalier de Fréminville, who, equally with his countryman, Émile Souvestre, deplores the wilful destruction and spoliation going on in his native land. 'The monuments of ancient France,' he writes sadly, 'are at the present time considered in the light of quarries only, supplying building materials ready for use;' and any one who should now follow in the exact footsteps of this indefatigable traveller, whether visiting dolmens and menhirs, feudal châteaux, or churches and abbeys, must most surely miss many of the antiquities he describes. Finistère, like Morbihan, was the favourite land of the Druid, though it abounds in so many other objects of interest that most travellers whose time is limited will prefer to see Quimper, Plougastel, and St. Pol de Léon at leisure, rather than make hurried visits to twice as many places. Travel, above all other intellectual enjoyments, must be taken slowly, and in small portions, since no other kind of pleasure or instruction so easily clogs the appetite and wearies the brain. Especially is this moderation to be enjoined in Brittany, where, in spite of good hotels, much roughing it has still to be encountered.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN AUTUMN TRIP IN BRITTANY—*continued.*

IV.—CÔTES DU NORD.

IT was the 1st of November when I left St. Pol de Léon, that is to say the Fête of Toussaint and a holiday. The cathedral bells were ringing for mass, the open place in front was crowded with country folks in Sunday dress, itinerant vendors were doing a considerable amount of business in toys, cakes, and coffee; and long strings of fine-looking Breton lads were being marshalled to church by their Jesuit schoolmasters and tutors. Many wore the various costumes of Morbihan and Finistère, and evidently belonged to the peasant farming class, whilst all had a cheery, healthful, out-of-door look which reminded me of English boys; some were tall youths of sixteen or seventeen, and it was a painful sight to see them watched and guarded by priests on each side with more surveillance than is accorded to juvenile thieves and vagabonds in England.

The fête of Toussaint is a day devoted to holiday-making, church-going, and more especially to churchyards. The Breton lives in close familiarity with death; witness the ossuaries or bone-houses in

country churchyards, the death's-heads and cross-bones painted on the parish bier, which is conspicuously placed in the churches, and other funereal suggestions with which he loves to surround himself. This characteristic of the Breton of to-day, as of his ancient precursors, has been commented upon by many writers. The Gaul was eminently sociable, sympathetic, and demonstrative ; and the Léon peasant believes that he confers a friendly service in talking to the dead, who, like himself, were fond of company in life, and do not wish to be deserted in the grave. Thus I saw old women knitting, children playing, and men gossiping in the churchyard, as if it were an ordinary place of resort.

A railway is now projected between Plouaret and Lannion, but at present the journey has to be made in the diligence—a vehicle trundling along at a snail's pace, and which is divided into two compartments, which ought to be called *Paradis et Enfer.* If the former epithet seems an exaggeration applied to the *coupé*, at least no one will deny that it is appropriate to the *fond*, with its filthy floor, the inveterate smoking and spitting that goes on, the uncomfortable seats and spare accommodation. The diligence coupé is on the whole a much less uncomfortable seat than that of the carriage, so called by courtesy, and much more economical. Carriages are the one exorbitant item in travelling expenses here. For the most part they are as bad as they are dear. Carriages, indeed, and carriage hire, form the traveller's only grievance in Brittany. I was certainly not prepared for the luxury I found in the Hôtel de l'Europe

at Lannion. My bedroom had wall-papers fit for a London drawing-room, polished floors, soft rugs, mirrors, marble-topped washstand, candelabra, and respectable prints on the wall. Nor was the usual pretty waiting-maid and agreeable landlady wanting; but I found here, as in other places, the order of things changed—the men doing the inferior work, the women waiting at table. In fact, the head waiter in this part of Brittany is generally a woman, and I must say does her work admirably.

Next morning was dull and misty but warm, the fore-runner of a bright unclouded afternoon. Opposite to my window were some beautiful old houses with gables, dark stained framework, and carved cornices; but in the market-place are the most picturesque relics of old Breton architecture I have yet seen. One is stained saffron colour, which sets off its dark framework and mouldings to the best advantage, and both —alas! only two now remaining to tell what Lannion was three hundred years back—are highly ornamental and characteristic. The quaint dormers and turrets of these old houses I only saw equalled in Pontivy, to be described by-and-by, and the elaborateness and oddness of the carving are indescribable. The market-place is animated; and though the men wear no costume here, which one misses sadly, the women retain a becoming *coiffe*, and form picturesque groups, as they stand, amid the stone jars of cream and butter, or behind stalls of vegetables.

Lannion is worthy of its name, surely as soft and poetic as any in Brittany; and, like many others, found in Cornwall, Lanyon cromlech being well known

to antiquarians in Cornwall. The town itself, like Hennebont and Pontivy, is so ill paved that a shower is sufficient to fill the streets with pools and runlets of water, through which you wade ankle-deep. But the site is charming. It lies between a wild bit of scenery leading to the sea, and a delicious valley widening out towards Plouaret, with woods and winding river and feudal ruins within reach to tempt the traveller into many an excursion. Parts of the cultivated soil between Plouaret and Lannion remind me of England, so advanced is agriculture here. The land is clean, the farm buildings substantial, and even a few flowers are planted before the houses here and there. Lannion is one link in the long chain of Arthurian romance. On his way here, between Morlaix and Plouaret, a traveller passes a dreary waste beside the sea called St. Michel-sur-Grève, where, according to legend, King Arthur—Artus in Breton chronicle—fought the dragon; and off Lannion lies the mysterious island of Aval or Avalon, where he desired to be buried—the island valley of Avalon,

> Where falls not hail or rain or any snow,
> Nor even wind blows loudly, but it lies,
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair, with orchard lawns,
> And bowery hollows crowned with summer seas.

I think I went to Lannion more for Tennyson's sake than anything else, though when I got there no one could tell me which of the many islands lying off the coast was Aval or Avalon. Most likely Mr. Baring-Gould is right when he classes this mysterious island with the numerous class of myths referring to the terrestrial Paradise, such as the Fortunate Isles of

Pindar, the Garden of the Hesperides, &c. Full of vague speculation, therefore, and having made up my mind to see, if not the real Avalon, at least the place where Avalon was supposed to be, I set off for the coast. The day was now exquisite, with pearly clouds floating across a pale blue sky, and lovely lights and shadows in the mellowing woods and hedges. As we drove on, the smiling landscapes of Lannion were soon left behind, and nothing could be in greater contrast than the wild scenery beyond, as we approached the sea and village of Ploumanach. The little fishing village of Ploumanach is a collection of hovels, built pêle-mêle among the masses of red granite, which are flung about the shore, as if the Titans had here been playing ninepins, and suddenly left off the game. The view from the hill overlooking the village and sea is magnificent —intense blue waves smooth as a lake, pale purple islands beyond; and nearer, lying under our feet, houses and rocks huddled confusedly together; huge fragments, here piled one on the top of the other, like a child's tower of bricks, there so closely wedged together as if even an earthquake could not separate them. Sometimes an enormous slab would be perched, dolmen-like, on the narrowest point of columnar supports, looking as if a child's finger could tip it over; at others, you might see a grand monolith, standing alone like some solitary menhir, whilst all around, near and afar, the ground was covered with blocks, cones, pyramids, every fantastic form that granite can take, making up an indescribably strange and fantastic scene. The village—if village it can be

called—is very dirty, and to reach the coast you have to go through a succession of filthy little alleys, wading ankle-deep through pools of liquid manure. These fisher folks might, without any trouble worth mentioning, and no expense, have the best thresholds and stepping-stones in the world, not to speak of pavements; but they do not even lay down a few blocks in front of their habitations so as to bridge over the invariable black stream through which they must wade whenever going out or coming in.

But what matters all this? We are soon far too enraptured at the prospect before us to think of the slough of despond through which we have passed in order to reach it. A little way off lay the seven islands, or islet rocks, now amethystine between a turquoise sky, and lapis lazuli sea. Not a breath is stirring this soft summer day — it is the 3rd of November. Yet the waves here are never at rest, and dash with perpetual murmur against the glowing sea-walls. As we wandered along the edge of the cliffs the full splendour and weirdness of the scene became apparent, the scattered fishing village looking like a collection of pigmy dwellings amid the gigantic rocks scattered about. Looking seaward, the piled up masses of fiery granite forming ramparts, chasms, precipices, innumerable against the purple white-crested waves breaking below. Wild geese, sea-ducks, and sea-gulls, were flying overhead; a few fishing-boats were out at sea; whilst landward the only living things in sight were odd little black sheep, mere tufts of wool, as it seemed, browsing on the brown hills above Plouṃanach. Which of those lovely little

islands is Avalon, 'where falls not rain, nor hail, nor any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly,' my guide does not know, but thinks it is Tomé; and the old keeper of the lighthouse, when I made him understand what I wanted, for he was very deaf, shook his head and said, 'Le roi Arthur, il n'est pas de ce pays.' An old traveller in Finistère, writing forty years ago, says: 'King Arthur was buried in the isle of Aval or Avalon, lying off the coast of Lannion, not far off from his favourite residence of Kerduel, or Carduel, so famous in the legends of the Round Table. The English have endeavoured erroneously to appropriate to themselves these localities.' But neither from books nor hearsay could I satisfy my curiosity as to which of the dreamy-looking islands before me was Avalon, and time did not admit of a journey to any, tempting though the sea looked on this exquisite autumn day. Had it been real instead of apparent summer, I should have taken up my abode at Lannion for several weeks instead of days, in order not only to explore the coast, but the seven islands, especially one—noted for its colonies of sea-ducks or black divers, in French called macreuses or perroquet-de-mer, and in the dialect of the country, calcoulo—and which is, in its way, as curious as Puffin Island. Ploumanach is on no account to be missed, whether or no visited, as in my case, for Tennyson's and King Arthur's sake. It is quite as remarkable as Penmarch, and the one place differs from the other as Pont l'Abbé from Plougastel.

How Arthurian and Cornish are the names of places here! The Tre and the Pen, if not the Pol, by which you know the Cornish men, abound, and

such names as Tregastel, Treveneuc, Tregarvan, recall Cornwall, as much as Kerduel, Tonquédec, and Coatfrec savour of the Table Round. Those who have travelled there will sometimes feel in a second Cornwall here.

Next day I drove to Tonquédec, one of the fine feudal castles that have as yet escaped destruction. The beautiful site of Lannion is fully realised as you drive towards it, its entourage being characterised by that gracious, winning beauty seen at Quimper. When we leave the high road we pass into Devonshire-like lanes, with well-tilled fields and pastures on either side. The cottages have a cheerier look than any I have yet seen, with little side gardens full of dahlias and chrysanthemums, and even roses here and there. At the open door sit old women spinning at the wheel, whilst children play around, darting across the road at the approach of our vehicle, with a moth-like attraction towards danger. This odd propensity of these wild little Breton children I had noticed before; whenever the diligence was going quicker than usual some little urchin would make a rush to get under the wheels, and often would nearly escape being killed. 'It is always so,' my driver said, when pulling up just in time to save a youngster's neck. 'If I had killed one of these little wretches by running over it, I should be punished; yet I am sure it would not be my fault.' And without any impartiality I must say that it would not. I can only account for such behaviour in the fact of an occasional diligence and carriage being the only excitement that breaks the monotony

of daily life, and having such an effect upon their brains as to occasion a temporary aberration. There were rude stone crosses planted by the wayside, and quaint churches with pagoda-like towers here and there. Once a wedding-party passed us: two or three old-fashioned carts formed the cortége, in the first of which sat the bride, with a huge bunch of artificial orange-flowers on her breast, and the large horn-shaped lace head-dress, or superstructure, worn upon those occasions. Plodding through the mud on foot were the remainder of the wedding-guests, the men wearing an odd kind of swallow-tail coat, which gave them a nondescript and shabby appearance. There is no longer any costume worth mentioning in Lannion now-a-days, and the bridal coiffe will doubtless soon disappear also. Thirty years ago Émile Souvestre described a holiday crowd here assembling to see a Breton drama, *The Four Sons of Aymon,* which for colour and naïveté must have rivalled the famous masquerades of Rome or Venice. He speaks of the tailors, bakers, butchers, sailors, and millers, as each distinguished by their dress, and the fair Lannionnais, the Trégorois, the Lamballais, each clad in their piquant and becoming costumes. This is all changed, and, from an artist's point of view, for the worse.

As we drew near Tonquédec we dipped into a richly wooded valley, its precipitous sides clothed with yellowing woods, and deep down, in the heart of it a rushing turbulent river. By-and-by, we perceive the grey towers of Tonquédec rising majestically above all, and, leaving the carriage, ascend a narrow road that winds upwards amid the woods to the

summit on which it stands. I have seen, perhaps, as fine feudal ruins, but none so superbly situated as these; if, indeed, ruins they can be called, seeing how much remains. Arrived at the top of the hill, and wandering leisurely around the undulating ground which now surrounds the castle, instead of a moat, I revelled in the landscape and splendid towers crowning it so proudly. The solitude was unbroken. There was no sound but the soft autumn wind soughing through the branches, the dropping of ripe chestnuts on the dry fern leaves, and the rushing of the river far below. On either side stretched sweeps of autumn woods, richest gold and purple mingled with sombre green; beyond rose isolated hills crested with pine and stunted oak; whilst at my feet, amid fern-clad banks and mossy rocks, bordered with gorse, wended the dark foaming river. Here the gracious, the wild, and the savage, all came into the picture, the stately melancholy towers of Tonquédec standing out in bold and picturesque relief. I daresay an artist would prefer Ploumanach as a subject, but a good pedestrian might spend many days in exploring these woods and valleys, and could doubtless, if able to use his pencil, find charming bits. To-day alike woods and valleys were inaccessible, much rain having turned the side paths into a rivulet; but the sky was bright, the air soft, the sunshine warm, and I was well content. As we drove home the weather changed, and we had warm April-like showers, with fitful gleams of sunshine, and delicious rainbows spanning the mellow woods. On our way we met a priest and a nun jogging along in a rude kind of gig, the former driving,

and both chatting amicably together. There was surely nothing unaccountable in such an arrangement, but it strikes one as odd. Most likely the good-natured village curé had overtaken this *sœur Blanche* —for she belonged to the order of white-robed nuns —and given her a lift. The department of the Côtes du Nord, like Finistère, abounds in churches, nunneries, and religious institutions. Priests and nuns are met at every turn, and whenever you enter a church you find something going on there. The amount of time people of all ranks spend in church-going here is something tremendous. It did my heart good to see the cloth-market here on a dull day. The pedlars had displayed their goods to best advantage, the stalls being piled with that warm, solid Normandy cloth the peasants wear so much of. Here were delicious shades of bright blue and purple, green, almost oriental in its soft dye, and browns and greys of various shades. Here, too, the farming women displayed their flour and meal in sacks; and toys, cutlery and sabots, had a market-place to themselves. The country people who poured in with their pigs, vegetables, and other goods, might be seen later returning home with parcels of the cloth or groceries they had just bought. The women's short cloth dresses were admirably adapted for the long walk home, and all were provided with excellent red, blue, or plum-coloured umbrellas.

Lannion would be a good starting-point for many excursions, and, as I have already stated, possesses a very nice hotel, with extremely low charges and excellent rooms, food, and attendance. The town itself,

though by comparison with St. Pol de Léon a gay and busy metropolis, is very quiet. There is no noise except the clattering of sabots on the pavements, or rather streets without pavements, and no excitement except the daily arrival of the diligence. The only newspaper that finds its way here is *Le Petit Journal*, and that I believe you have to order in advance. The railway now projected between Lannion and Plouaret will doubtless make a considerable difference; but one thing is certain, it cannot make this charming little town more attractive to the lover rather of the picturesque than of creature comforts. In some respects all hotels in Brittany are behindhand, but they are improving, and the people are uniformly pleasant to deal with. Railways will, doubtless, introduce many innovations—bells in the rooms, washing-basin larger than a tea-cup, &c., &c. —but they will also infallibly introduce high prices.

Much as I had set my heart upon proceeding by diligence to Tréguier and Paimpol, I was obliged at the eleventh hour to give up the plan. The rain had come at last; the diligence—for I inspected it—was a sorry affair, and I was assured that the hotels were not to be relied on. So very reluctantly, I went on by rail to St. Brieuc instead. Every other house in St. Brieuc is a nunnery or monastic institution, and the churches, of which there are enough to supply all Brittany, are always full. For themselves they are not worth seeing, but the church-goers are, and here they are as much resorted to by the rich as the poor. I went into one, and saw a lady and gentleman, after purchasing two long wax lights at the door, light

them, and sitting down before the image of a saint, quietly perform their devotion, candle in hand. They evidently intended to sit there till they burned out, which on a nice calculation must have taken three hours. I went into another, and saw another sight as pathetic as the first was grotesque. It was a large church, and service was going on in one part; but in a quiet corner, where only a couple of beggar-women knelt mumbling over their beads, I caught sight of a large pair of sabots projecting from under the curtain of the confessional. Soon after, a sweet, pious-looking peasant woman came out, whose tear-stained, troubled face showed that with her confession was a solemn thing. She stood for a moment before the image of the Virgin, lost in melancholy thought, then sighing, took up her basket of butter and eggs and went away. As for the priest, he bustled out, with a look of inexpressible relief, drew on his coat, and hurried away, evidently glad to get the duty over. When a man goes to confessional, all the women have to wait; so much rarer is the occurrence, that he is regarded as the lost sheep that was found. These churches are full of ex-votos and marble tablets, commemorating the protecting grace of this saint or that; in some cases the inscription was merely 'Merci à St. Joseph,' or 'À St. Anne, merci.' In one a long placard was placed near a collection of these ex votos, setting forth that plenary and partial indulgence would be given to the *associés* of St. Joseph, on various conditions, one of which was the saying an ave or paternoster and other prayers when the Angelus sounded at night! In another chapel was an emblazoned memo-

rial inscription, stating that it was built to commemorate the miraculous appearance of a certain saint, whose name I forget, two or three years ago. The guide-books dismiss St. Brieuc summarily; but there are many curious old houses here, as characteristic as any I have seen; some with the quaintest little turreted windows rising from the pent-house roof, supported by beams, others with carved wooden framework, representing allegorical and historical figures. It is a clean, cheerful town, with pleasant suburban gardens, and a look of comfort and prosperity everywhere. The peasant women with their sunny coiffures, solid cloth dresses reaching to the ankles, and displaying home-knitted stockings of warmest wool, and pleasant ruddy faces, are good to see. As a rule, the country folks are well-favoured, and there is a prevailing appearance of well-being among all classes. Some of the men wore capital, comfortable-looking coats of goats'-skin, but nothing that can be called costume. My hotel (L'Univers) has a pleasant garden full of flowers, and is handsomely furnished, with a commendable liberality as to the size of the wash-basin and water-jugs; whilst my room, costing three francs a day, was not only comfortable but elegant. It is edifying to see here, as was the case at Lannion, the men turned into scullery-maids and the women into head waiters. Instead of that obsequious, often conceited person, the head waiter, who bullies all the rest of the servants, and does little himself, here it is a woman at the head of affairs, and the men who are sent flying hither and thither. It is wonderful how well things are managed

here with a small staff of servants, as far as I could make out, one woman, two men and a boy, besides the cook, doing the work of this large hotel. St. Brieuc, after the romantic and old world towns I had lately seen, was a sudden disenchantment; yet it was a pleasure, after the silence and sleepiness of St. Pol de Léon and Lannion, to be once more within the sound of a railway whistle and within reach of a newspaper.

Rossel, one of the most single-minded and heroic figures in the Commune, was a Breton, and born at St. Brieuc. Whatever may be said of the greater part of the leaders in the Communist movement, and without denying the great crime of raising civil war within reach of the enemy's cannon, there can be no doubt that the young and brilliant Rossel—and many others engaged in the movement—was a man of convictions. He was universally beloved, and in his last days before execution offered the spectacle so rare in France, of a courage and magnanimity, not depending on philosophy or atheism, but on devout religious belief. Efforts were made to save him, in vain. He had resigned his commission in the regular army before accepting command under the Commune—a fact to be taken account of in judging his conduct.

There was a tremendous storm of wind and rain on the night of my arrival, and next morning winter seemed to have come all at once, and as it often does here, in torrents of rain—precursors of the terrible inundations that followed later in the month. The country was sodden; yet whenever a gleam of sunshine broke through the clouds, the weather was pleasant and mild. The rain accompanied me to Pontivy, but every

now and then the dark clouds would roll away, showing the blue sky, and a rainbow would span the landscape with beautiful effect. The bit of railway passing through the forests of Loudéac and Lorges is very striking, and a great change after the so-called 'Landes' I had lately passed through—those wide sweeps of heath and brushwood, as yet uncultivated, characteristic of North Brittany. Hundreds, nay thousands of miles of forest, lay around us, the mingled blue-green and reddish-yellow of pine, beech and oak, now lighted up by a brilliant gleam of sunshine, now irradiated by a rainbow, now blotted and blurred by the rain. These forests abound with wolves, which, in spite of the rewards offered per head by the Government, seem as far from being exterminated as ever.

Pontivy must be quite charming on a fine day. It used to be called Napoléonville, in honour of the new quarter added by the first Napoleon; but since the overthrow of the Empire it has lost its later appellation, and is called Pontivy only, even on the railway tickets. A French writer is said greatly to have affronted the Pontiviens by the following innocent pleasantry concerning the twin towns. 'These two names,' he writes, 'Napoléonville and Pontivy, have their *raison d'être*, for they are two towns in juxtaposition—Pontivy northwards, with its narrow streets, and ancient houses, on which the birds build and the cock-crow gives the signal for the trumpets in the barracks; Napoléonville southwards, with its large open streets, consists only of barracks and public offices. Now and then may be seen a soldier wandering across the grass-green Place de Napoléon, which, to be animated,

should be turned into a pasture for the cavalry horses. They would even find fodder in the streets, for this year (1864) the Quai Arcole was planted with clover, the Rue Lunéville with potatoes, and the Rue Marengo with green peas! Pontivy is being gradually transformed, but it will be long before it deserves the name of Napoléonville.' The modern town is uninteresting enough, and is exactly like the brand new French towns built under the Imperial régime in Algeria; but the old is very picturesque, and both are framed in by a lovely landscape. The wooded hills, the winding river Blavet, the quaint old château with its pointed turrets; lastly, but not the least, the beautiful old streets of Pontivy itself, might in fine weather occupy the artistic traveller weeks instead of days. A well-kept path leads round the château, which lies in a hollow, formerly a moat. Nothing but a small chapel at the back indicates its present uses, namely, a convent school. Almost all the finest old buildings in Brittany have been monopolised by the Church for educational and ecclesiastical purposes, and thus it happens that so few are accessible to tourists. Beyond, and following the winding river, is a very pretty walk, where I met a party of nuns enjoying a brisk run before afternoon service. The scenery is quiet, pastoral, abounding in natural beauties and what the French call *riant*. Returning to the town, I strolled back to the old town with its quaint mediæval houses, here not isolated as at St. Brieuc and Lannion, but forming whole streets, the saffron or yellow stucco and black panelling showing recent renovation. Some are in black and white, with a great deal of ornamen-

tation ; and every device, both of architect and decorator, seems to have been used in order to obtain variety. It is to be hoped that these unique streets of Pontivy will escape destruction, for in no other town is so much of the ancient domestic architecture of Brittany left intact. In Pontivy a good shower makes rivers in the streets, but in Napoléonville you walk on macadamised pavements worthy of Paris. Nothing can be quieter than the twin towns ; no life or movement except in the direction of the church and the barracks, no sound except the bells calling to prayer and the trumpets to parade.

It was Sunday morning when I arrived, and as I approached the church, from which an enormous congregation had just issued, the puffs of hot air drove me back into the street. It was like entering the hottest conservatory at Kew ; and no wonder, seeing the multitudes that were dispersing—a detachment of hussars with their band, who played as they marched back to barracks—large girls' schools marshalled by nuns—boys' schools marshalled by priests—ladies and gentlemen, and crowds of peasants, the men with broad felt hats and long hair, white serge jackets and vests, ornamented with gay braid and buttons, and cut open like ladies' dinner-dresses, showing a snowy shirt ; the women in comfortable-looking black stuff hoods turned back with red, and long cloth cloaks.

Opposite the church, under a covered market-place, the usual Sunday fair was going on, and a brisk trade was being done in hot chestnuts, haberdashery, and cakes. By degrees the people dispersed to reassemble at vespers in the afternoon, when the congre-

gation was as large as before. In fact, there was no longer standing-room left when service began, and a large school of little girls marshalled in by nuns presented a pitiable sight, being so closely wedged together that they could hardly stir.

Pontivy, the birthplace of Émile Souvestre and his friend, the great and good Ange Guépin of Nantes, is a *chef-lieu d'arrondissement* of Morbihan, and ought not therefore to be included in a chapter headed the Côtes du Nord ; but it is a place that most travellers who reach St. Brieuc will visit. It is a centre, moreover, from which many interesting excursions may be made ; and, judging from the look of the hotel I visited, creature comforts are by no means wanting. There was a pleasant garden at the back, with pigeons fluttering about and turkey-cocks strutting and hens cackling. A homely place is this, farmhouse more than hotel, and a place in which people might make themselves at home and be perpetually happy as long as the fine weather lasted ; but woe betide them in days of rain !

The rain had come in earnest at last, and next day I returned to Nantes, which a week later was threatened with an inundation. The remainder of my projected journeys in Western France had therefore to be deferred till the following spring.

CHAPTER XX.

ANGERS.

THE traveller who enters Anjou by way of Brittany, and has given himself time to study the place he visits, will find a striking contrast between the opulent capital of the Loire Inférieure and Angers. Nantes may be called the Berlin or, better still, the Hamburg of Western France, whilst Angers is certainly its Weimar. At Nantes you find all life, business, and activity, whether you stroll along its crowded quays, inspect its factories and magazines, or wander about its streets on market-day. The handsome equipages, the fashionable toilettes, the gay shops, the splendid mansions, indeed remind one of Paris; whereas but little animation stirs the quiet streets of Angers, and as yet no Haussmann has laid a destructive hand on its beautiful old architecture. Angers, like Weimar, is eminently aristocratic, conservative, and artistic. Nantes is commercial, enterprising, and strongly tinctured with Republicanism. Doubtless Nantes is the liveliest place to live in; but for the holiday tourist who has a few days, or even weeks to spare, no more delightful spot could be suggested than Angers.

A first impression of the town is unforgetable. I arrived late at night and put up at a hotel on the Quay

Ligny—what old traveller will lodge in the middle of a town that is built on a river?—and waking early next morning, beheld a ravishing prospect from my window. The broad bright Maine lay close below, its cool blue waters broadening westward towards the verdant fields of La Vendée, and spanned by three noble bridges; whilst opposite, rose spire and dome and tower, burnished with the first red and gold of the morning. The exquisite pearliness of the atmosphere, the delicious light and shade, the harmonious outline of every feature in the picture, rivalled many a kindred recollection of Italy and the East. Beauty exists in various kinds and degrees, but none could be more pleasure-giving and tranquillising than this.

Then the picturesque streets, the old churches, the quaint mediæval relics, that meet you here and there! Everything delights and surprises the traveller, and no disfigurement mars the picture. Quitting the Quay Ligny I found myself close to the château, an ordinary feudal castle, which sets a seal upon a town, lending strength, majesty, and a certain kind of savage charm, but about which there is nothing else to be said, except, perhaps, this:—we are apt to forget how intimately connected were, at one time, English and French history. Under the Plantagenets, Angers was a second capital of England. Here Henry the Second held his court, and till 1259 Comte d'Anjou as well as Duke of Normandy was a title of our English kings. When the proud and imperious Eleanor of Aquitaine added that province to the English crown, already enriched by Maine, Touraine, and Anjou, the fortunes of France were at a low ebb indeed. *Jean sans Terre,*

as King John is always called in French history, lost these provinces to England, but it was not till the reign of Louis XI. that Anjou became a portion of the French kingdom. An instructive page of history is an old French town like this, and, if well understood, no small acquisition to our store of historic knowledge. Near the château stands David's spirited statue of King René, King of Sicily and Duke of Anjou—'Le bon Roi René' as he is called, the father of the heroic Margaret of Anjou, the knight *sans peur et sans reproche*, the patron of arts, science, and letters. Himself a poet, a musician, and a painter, King René hated business and war, and loved the arts of peace; to him Anjou owed the Provence rose, the carnation, and the muscatel grape; and when Louis XI. robbed him of his duchy and he fled to Provence, the cultivation of flowers was one of his chief consolations. The good King René was allowed little peace either by his foes or fortune. He was tender of heart, and saw his daughter dethroned, his grandson barbarously assassinated, his favourite son dead, his possessions confiscated; surely no monarch was ever so unfortunate! It is satisfactory to read that he was skilled in music and painting, and that when he could no longer see to draw he could interest himself in gardening.

Leaving the Boulevard and the handsome Rue d'Orléans—where I stopped to breakfast with some dear French friends—we enter the town. To quit the glaring sunshine and white walls of the modern suburb and dip into the cool narrow streets of mediæval Angers is like closing a fashionable novel from the sea-side library, and opening a quaint old

poet bound in calf and gold. These hanging gables, these flower-filled dormers, and fanciful carvings in wood and stone, have nothing in common with the bustling uniformity of modern civilisation. Fortunately for the artist and the archæologist, the streets have been hitherto unmolested, and afford to both an almost unsurpassed experience. To take one feature of the picture before us, out of many, I have mentioned the dormer windows; but a whole chapter might be written about them. Without a pencil it is impossible to convey any adequate idea of their picturesqueness and variety. When you come to a verbal description, there seems little to say; yet any one of these projecting dormers, turned into a perfect bower of roses, creepers, and vines, with perhaps a gentle-faced matron knitting by, a cat sleeping on the sill, or a bird singing from its perch in the roof, lends indefinable grace and gaiety to the sober-coloured streets. The framework is of dark stained wood; in summer the windows are always open, and there, amid their flowers and pets, the humble Angevines sit down to rest when work is done. The peasants, and indeed all classes, possess an uncommon share of good looks, enhanced in the case of the former by the coquettish fanshaped lace head-dress of Pont de Cé usually worn here. The beauty, geniality, and animal spirits of the population greatly add to the enjoyment of the wise traveller who stays long enough to become acquainted with them.

Angers is a small town, and its most remarkable buildings and monuments are close together. Passing

the fine old tower of St. Aubin, all that now remains of the once famous Benedictine Abbey founded by Childebert in 534, we enter a little street in which are crowded together architectural studies and beauties enough alone to bring hither the curious. Before us rises the stately cathedral dedicated to St. Maurice, a little iron gate leads to the exquisite ruins of Toussaint, whilst a few steps further on is the Logis Barrault, one of the most splendid specimens of the palaces of the municipal nobility in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Descriptions of architecture read coldly, and those who come to Angers would do well to make themselves acquainted beforehand with M. Viollet-le-Duc's chapter on the Angevine Style (see vols. iv. and ix. of his great work), in which they will find the many peculiar beauties of the churches of Angers pointed out and explained. A cathedral is a world in itself, and far too beautiful and solemn a thing to be made the subject of ordinary travellers' tales. I will therefore only counsel those who follow in my steps to visit this one again and again, alike in the blaze of the mid-day sun, when to pass into its aisles, so gorgeously lighted from above, yet so harmonious and dusky below; to gaze upon its glorious arches, so airy, so symmetrical, and so strong; its sculptured saints and marble altars; or for a moment to become one with the fervent worshippers kneeling here and there; and to realise all that religious symbolism has been and still is to many; or in the silvery twilight when it towers over the busy streets, like some rock hewn into unearthly shape, grandeur and beauty, having no part in human joy or sorrow, a

mere reminder, a shadowing forth of the Majesty we believe in but do not understand. The principal features of the interior are the old stained glass, the tapestries adorning the nave, and, for students of architecture, the domical vault. There is no triforium or clerestory in these Angevine churches, and the effect of the domical vault—this principal characteristic—is not pleasing to the eye. But the painted glass of the thirteenth century is gorgeous in the extreme, and lends much splendour to the whole.

Close to the cathedral—which on the occasion of my first visit glowed beneath a burning blue sky, almost as mellowly as the Pyramids—are the ruins of the Abbey of Toussaint, reminding the English visitor of Tintern on a smaller scale. The delicate lacework of window and arch are trellised with greenery, and what little remains of this once beautiful building is seen for the most part through a screen of foliage. The bright blue sky, the cool grey stone, the sunlit trees, make up a lovely picture.

Near these ruins, and approached by a narrow little street, is the Logis Barrault, now used as a Fine Arts and Natural History Museum. It is not an open day, but the pleasant-faced concierge produces her keys, and allows us to enter. Foreigners, indeed, are never refused admittance anywhere in France, except to the arsenals, which since the war of 1870–71 have been closed to the public for fear of spies. Let not the hurried tourist, therefore, give up picture gallery and museum because his guide tells him it is not open day. French politeness admits him when residents are refused.

The Logis Barrault—built by Olivier Barrault, treasurer of Brittany, and like our Whittington, three times mayor of Angers,—is a magnificent mansion of the Renaissance, built in grey stone, with a courtyard —and running gallery in the centre. Its flamboyant arches, pointed turrets, winding staircases with fluted arches, elaborately carved chimney-pieces, and ceilings sculptured with flowers, grotesque figures, and armorial bearings, are well worth a close inspection; and not only must these be seen, but some other portions, not forming a part of the museum, such as the upper storey, the kitchen, &c. For an account of the rise of municipal architecture in Angers, so lavish in expense, and yet so chastened in style, see (in the Angers library) 'L'Anjou et ses Monuments, par Codad Faultrier et P. Hawke, dessinateur.' A very good account is there given of the influence of the communal spirit upon architecture. The Logis constructed by the wealthy citizen partook of the nature of both château and *maison bourgeoise.* Olivier Barrault gave his name to the French architectural term *Barraude* and was not the only rich Angevine who devoted himself to the arts. Angers was at all times, as it is now, an exceedingly aristocratic city, and the merchant followed in the wake of the nobles. When Cæsar Borgia visited Louis XII. here, he was lodged in the Logis Barrault; his Oriental magnificence contrasting strangely with the simplicity of the French king. In the book just alluded to, and which I found in the library, are many interesting facts about this and the other splendid monuments of Anjou. Not only the nobles and the wealthy merchants loved

splendour and decoration, but even the middle classes, as the richly-carved houses belonging to them testify. It is, moreover, especially in these that the greatest play of fancy was allowed both sculptors, glass painters, and designers. Whilst the grand seigneurs chose principally armorial bearings, and the priests religious subjects, the *bourgeoisie* gave the artist much greater choice of subject. Thus, we find extreme variety prevailing in those middle-class dwelling houses belonging to shopkeepers. Sometimes it is the seven sins that are illustrated ; at others, technical subjects ; for the most part, the saints and angels are put outside, the grotesque figures and monsters inside—a terrible satire upon human nature, and a reiteration in deeds, not words, of the text concerning the whited sepulchre. The furniture, which was richly decorated, showed one prevailing principle ; the comic caricatures and licentious designs were confined to the sideboard and chest ; serious and sacred subjects to the bed, priedieu and chimney-pieces, representing, we suppose, the *foyer* or sacred family hearth. The sideboard and family chest, containing clothes and treasures, might aptly, on the other hand, satirize the vices and follies of that age.

Leaving the Logis Barrault, we enter the Place St. Croix, which recalls some of the most beautiful old towns of Germany. The *Maison Adam* in one corner gives a very good idea of the mediæval Angers described by the authors before alluded to, and the no less interesting mediæval Nantes, so accurately described by the learned Dr. Guépin and his English collaborateur, also mentioned. This *Maison Adam*

is childishly naïve, yet full of life, vigour, and artistic feeling. It is painted in black and white, with dormer windows and gable ends; but only a facile pencil could suggest the quaint illustrations of the Fall, so profusely sculptured on its walls. Here the artist has let his fancy run wild, and you find yourself bewildered amid fruits, flowers, heads of angel and demon, Adams, Eves, and Satans meeting you on every side. This house is, we may suppose, a fair specimen of the middle-class Angevine in former times; and comparing it with our own wretchedly bare, monotonous, and often ill-built constructions, we cannot say that, as far as modern domestic architecture is concerned, civilization has made any advance. In one respect, and perhaps in one respect only—namely, cleanliness—can modern Angevines be considered better off than their ancestors. Continuing our ramble, we reach the Hôtel Pincé, near the Post-office—a most beautiful old house, palace rather, of a rich Angevine, Pierre de Pincé, built in 1523. Angers is rich in art and generosity, and this hotel was purchased by the famous painter Bodinier, for 35,000 f., and presented to his native town on condition that it should be put to artistic purposes. It was turned into a People's Library in 1870; and though this can hardly be called a fulfilment of the artist's wish, doubtless the thing was done for some good reason. On a little door in a side wall is written 'Bibliothèque Populaire,' and though ladies are never admitted—so says the concierge—as foreigners, we are allowed to enter, by which means we not only see the interior of, but the materials that make up a free reading-room

in France. The Hôtel Pincé is less ornate, but quite as beautiful as the Logis Barrault, though unfortunately some of the magnificent rooms have been partitioned off for the convenience of the library. With the arrangements of the latter—literary, economic, hygienic—the most fastidious could find no fault. Here, for a cost of half a franc a month, readers can take home books exchangeable at pleasure; whilst for no charge at all they are provided with a spacious reading-room, comfortable chairs and tables, and a choice of the very best books in French classics and general literature, as well as scientific and other journals, daily and weekly. I studied those book-shelves carefully, and came away with a very high notion of the taste and discretion exercised by the municipal authorities of Angers in the choice of works.

The reading-room is pleasant, airy and comfortable; and here assemble every evening, without any kind of payment, gentlemen, tradesmen, workmen, and foreigners; none are refused admittance, though in the case of the latter, name and address are asked. The concierge told me that the attendance was usually very mixed, I suppose Angers not being large enough to support the *cercles*, or clubs, of every shade and sect found so plentifully in Nantes. The books in the lending library were of the same class, and were clean and in good order. This also is open to all ranks, and it is such facts as these that show us how thoroughly democratic is France. The more we study it and know it, the more we feel this.

We turned into the Évêché, or Bishop's Palace, but were soon glad to turn out again. It is a handsome

structure, now being enlarged and re-decorated. The designs are crude, and the colouring florid, reminding me of those brilliantly painted étagères made in Algiers. To add to our disenchantment we were taken into the billiard-room, where we found several ladies decorating crucifixes and banners with paper and tinsel flowers. Perhaps there was no reason why an Évêché should not have a billiard-table, and it was handier for the purpose than any other, but we felt a little shocked at the sight notwithstanding. As we returned home we passed many a pile of architecture that would have delighted an artist, such as the quaint old Cour d'Assise, and others in the narrow picturesque little streets leading to the Quay Ligny from the cathedral. All these things and many more may be seen in a morning's stroll; but fully to appreciate the beauties of Angers the traveller must settle down for some days, as I did, and make himself acquainted with the inside as well as outside of this delightful old town. The library, the museum, the churches, the promenades, offer a variety of resources alike to the artist, the student, and the dilettante, who are everywhere made welcome with that French urbanity to which English travellers are so much indebted.

The museum—that is to say the David Museum, for the other is not remarkable—merits a chapter to itself. Angers is rich in great names, having given birth to the artists Bodinier and Lenepveu, the chemists Olivier and Chevreul, and last but not least, David, better known as David d'Angers. Bodinier and Lenepveu have both greatly identified themselves with their native city, but the artistic prestige of Angers is mainly owing to David. What Pericles

was to Athens, what Michael Angelo is to Florence, what Goethe is to Weimar, David is to Angers. The whole place is full of him; and widely spread as are the great sculptor's works, it is here, and here alone, they can be justly appreciated. His was indeed a colossal genius. To traverse this vast sculpture gallery is to read a chapter of history, nobly written, and recounting the deeds of heroes. Courage, patriotism, lofty self-sacrifice, daring—all the qualities that stamp a great age or a dominant people—are here portrayed, embellished, immortalised. Nothing common, or deformed, or sensual, is to be found amid these hundreds, nay, thousands of masterpieces. David d'Angers revelled in the idealisation of bodily and intellectual strength, as his large statues testify, and to the smallest and most delicate medallion are imparted largeness and force. The mind is at first bewildered by the sense of such creative power, and such many sidedness, and artistic activity. Wherever David found grandeur and beauty, he set to work to perpetuate it in marble; and though France was naturally his favourite ground, he was equally at home in ancient Greece or the Slave States of America, when depicting the infant Hannibal or the young Greek at the tomb of Botzaris. To English visitors, the French subjects will naturally be most interesting, and no modern artist has done more to glorify the great men of his age and of his country than David. Among the statues none are more classic in feeling and plastic beauty than that of a young Republican drummer who pressed the tri-colour to his breast as he fell in the Vendean war. The figure of the boy

patriot is exquisitely tender in outline, and the expression of the dead face almost sublime, yet with a touch of childish peace and innocence. David was no partizan in art, and it mattered little to him whether the heroism he idealised was Royalist or Republican, so long as it was genuine. Thus we find ourselves here in company with Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, irrespective of creed, caste, and calling; and a more interesting portrait gallery than the numerous statues, busts, and four hundred and odd medallion portraits here collected, it would be hard to find. Among the busts of the deepest interest is that of Paganini—a strikingly powerful head, with an enormous frontal development, and the massive mouth and chin, so indicative of force and character. Balzac is equally fine, intellectually speaking, but his face wears a saturnine, almost superhuman expression, as if he recognised and rejoiced in his pitiless power of reading others. It is a head on which you gaze rather with wonder than pleasure. Humboldt's bust is very fine, and in its calm intellectualism reminds me of Goethe, whose 'Jupiter' bust is here. Lamennais' face has a touching interest of its own. The author of 'Paroles d'un Croyant' wears a plaintive expression, not quite that of a martyr or saint, rather of one trying to surmount the clogs of the flesh and enter that of unalloyed belief. The familiar downcast head of Béranger is here, also Victor Hugo and George Sand. David, indeed, seems to have left out none of his gifted contemporaries, whether heroes, poets, artists, or men of science. Perhaps there is no more beautiful subject in the whole gallery than that of Bichat, the cele-

brated anatomist, tenderly examining the chest of a naked child; but David's tenderness and strength are never more fully displayed than when he is dealing with slavery. There is a series of exquisite bas-reliefs illustrating the career of our English Clarkson and Wilberforce, once seen never to be forgotten. I recall one more especially, in which the two men are represented surrounded by the poor slaves—men, women, and children—imploring their aid. Some are embracing their knees, uplifting their chained hands, others calling upon Heaven to bless their guardian angels. David knew how to impart dignity and pathos to the African as well as their English protectors, and some of these figures are quite beautiful, especially the women and little children. I have only mentioned a few of the many works of art here deserving of careful study. It is impossible to do more than suggest the extraordinary interest of this unique David gallery, which all who visit once will want to visit again and again.

The father of David d'Angers was a wood carver, and it was his father's success that fired the boy with the desire to be a sculptor. The wood carving in the Angers cathedral is the work of that devoted parent, who carried the child with him to the scenes of the Vendean war, and, strange to say, brought him safe back again after perils innumerable. David's early life was a hard struggle. 'Do not weep,' he said to his mother when setting out for Paris to make his way, 'in three years I shall win the Roman scholarship!' He kept his word; but, alas! his mother no longer lived to hear of her son's triumph. In 1816,

so deplorable was the condition of affairs in France that he decided to try his fortunes in England. He was invited to execute a work commemorative of Waterloo—an invitation putting fortune within his reach. 'No,' he said, 'my chisel was not made to outrage the brave, and not for all the wealth of your country would I be traitor to those who died in defending their country.' That same day he sold some clothes and returned to France, after a stay of eighteen days. His patriotism was rewarded, and a commission to undertake the statue of the great Condé, on the Pont de la Concorde, made his fortune secure. From that day to his death his talent was recognised and rewarded. The superb realism and originality of his work proclaimed him a genius, and it was a genius that accorded with the spirit of the times. Never before did France so need a great national artist to remind her of her illustrious men of peace and progress.

The *coup d'état* which destroyed the Republic could not support even an artist of liberal opinions. David d'Angers was exiled with many of his friends, and when he returned in 1855 was hardly recognised at all, so greatly had trouble and exile changed him. He died the following year, still full of noble projects. During his life he had executed 55 statues, 150 busts, 70 bas-reliefs, 20 statuettes, 500 medallions. Well indeed might his native city proudly style him David d'Angers!

I spent some delightful mornings in the Public Library, where the traveller is made welcome; and what with manuscripts, rare books, and modern

journals and reviews, will find ample entertainment. It is a charming room, lighted from one side only—a great advantage to readers—and overlooking a pleasant garden. A lover of old books might do worse than settle down here for the purpose of ransacking these book-shelves. In 1846 a Passion Play was acted at Angers; and at Valenciennes, some years ago, M. Leroy discovered a complete MS. of a Passion Play, including the Conception, Passion, and Resurrection, which was to last twenty days, part of which 'Mystère de la Passion' had been acted at Angers. Many profane and indecent 'Moralities' were acted in France about this time; and one author, after doing penance, was burned for profaning the church with such blasphemies. Doubtless many a 'find' like that of M. Leroy is yet in store for the patient investigator of such libraries as these, whilst to the ordinary student of French history and antiquities they are invaluable. There is no kind of form or ceremony about using them; you have merely to enter and ask for the book you wish to see, and the officials attend to your wants with promptness and politeness. Many interesting manuscripts came into my hands at Angers, one a collection of letters concerning 'La Religion St. Simonienne,' or the Socialistic philosophy founded by St. Simon, the precursor of Enfantin, Fourier, Cabet, and a legion of Socialist reformers. There was, some thirty years ago, quite a little brotherhood of St. Simonians at Angers, and though it is essentially aristocratic and conservative now, some democratic and socialistic ideas have filtered through—witness a certain little

'Bibliothèque Républicaine,' in other words, a democratic bookseller's shop, where are to be had all the newest anti-Bonapartist, anti-clerical, and anti-Legitimist propaganda. The Republican idea in France is, however, subjected to perpetual martyrdom, and the unfortunate proprietor of this shop, a man of quite superior intelligence and character, had just emerged from a twelvemonth's imprisonment, besides having to pay a heavy fine, for a mere indiscreet personality. To add to his misfortune, his only child, born during his imprisonment, died soon after; so no wonder both father and mother looked ill and anxious. This sort of thing happens every day in France. Republican editors are imprisoned and fined, and their newspapers stopped and restricted in sale, on the feeblest pretext. Were it not for the rigid economy of the French middle-classes, it would be impossible to understand how any of these enlightened and well-written journals continue to exist as they do.

I had not intended to introduce politics into this paper, but it is difficult to avoid them when writing of France—even of *Anjou Pittoresque*, of whom no wonder an Angevine poet wrote :—

> Tant que ma lyre
> Voudra les chansons élire,
> Que je lui commanderai
> Mon Anjou je chanterai.

A week's stay at Angers, however, only allows of an excursion to Ponts de Cé, renowned for its historic associations, pretty girls and windmills. This curious village is built story-wise; that is to say, the old part

of it lies low down in the Loire valley, and is often under water; whilst the new is built on a much higher level, and offers a refuge to the inhabitants of the former, whenever an inundation happens. It is a quaint old-world place, and as you drive over the bridge you have a magnificent view of the river, now bright and clear, the orchards and vineyards, green as emerald, shutting in the blue, the far-off villages, with church and château; whilst nearer are the overhanging rocks, and the rows of windmills perched so airily on their summits, like weird unearthly birds of prey, for a moment at rest with their wings folded in their eyrie, lend uniqueness to the picture. It is impossible, without an artist's pencil, to give any idea of the oddness, the humour, the mixed comic and serious, of such a scene. Do not some landscapes cause us to laugh, just as much as Offenbach's music, or those quaint animals and flowers that seem to have been created for that purpose? Any how, the company of windmills at Ponts de Cé, solemn as sentinels on their lofty ramparts, mischievous-looking as elves, keeping guard on a fairy realm, pathetic as scarecrows made of heroes' gear and garments, bear no likeness to any other on the face of the earth; and would remain in the memory without their association with the bloodiest annals of the Vendean war.

But there is something else to be seen at Ponts de Cé besides the windmills. Guide-books do not speak of the churches, both of which should be seen; for in the new one is some curious wood carving, and in the old some half-obliterated frescoes, well worth

inspection. The wood carving, brought hither from an older church, represents the twelve Apostles and the twelve Sibyls—a prophet and a Sibyl in each compartment, with the name of each written underneath. The Libyan Sibyl and St. Matthew, the Cumean Sibyl and St. Peter, and so on, every Sibyl of history being here presented. The workmanship is good, and the effect quaint and striking. In the frescoes of the old church we find the portrait of St. Blasius, an Irish saint.

I returned to Nantes of course, by the river, as all travellers should do, in order to see the Loire valley. The heat was tremendous—I am writing of August—a burning sun and cloudless sky, deepening in intensity as the day wore on, and lending a golden hue to the verdant landscape through which we glided so slowly. The banks were bright with mullein, willow-herb, and loose-strife, and sometimes we approached them so nearly that they were almost within arm's length; at others the river widened, and on either side rose stately châteaux, and frowning rock, and smiling villages, reminding us of the Rhine. These river-banks are rich in historic associations, every place we pass by recalling some incidents of the Vendean war; but time did not permit me to stop on the way and see them leisurely, as they deserve to be seen, so it was not without thankfulness that I reached my destination. The heat, the glare, and the brilliancy of an August day in the Loire valley, can be compared to Nile experiences, and nothing else that I am aware of; whilst the pure atmosphere and mild temperature of Nantes, where magnolias

flourish out of doors all the year round, and camellias are in full bloom in April gardens, bear some likeness to those of Algiers. In fact, whether in winter or summer, travellers in France owe no small part of their pleasure to the deliciousness of the climate, especially in the west and in Brittany, where it is tempered by the sea and the Gulf Stream.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOME NOBLE BRETONS OF TO-DAY.

A CHAPTER on Breton notabilities—which may interest travellers in Western France—cannot have a fitter opening than the following quotation from Michelet. 'Breton genius,' he says, 'is a genius characterised by indomitable opposition and resistance, a genius intrepid, blind, determined—witness Moreau, the adversary of Bonaparte. The fact is even more apparent when we come to literature and philosophy. Pelagius, who introduced the stoic spirit into Christianity, had for successors his fellow-countrymen—Abailard and Descartes. All these gave an impetus to the philosophy of their age. Always, in Descartes himself, we find the same disdain of facts, and contempt of history and philosophy, indicating, even in the intellect that laid the basis of psychology and enlarged mathematical science, more vigour than breadth.'

Entêté comme un Breton is proverbial; and as we review the list of illustrious Bretons of all ages we are struck by the quality of indomitable will pointed out by the great historian. Surely no province of France could show a nobler list of heroes, scientific men, and lovers of liberty! Michelet has elsewhere

called the Bretons 'les fils aînés de la liberté,' and it must be admitted that they have merited the title. Duguesclin, that knight, like Bayard, sans peur et sans reproche, born at Dinan, will occur to every one as an instance of chivalrous devotion. When we come to later times we find La Tour d'Auvergne, true patriot, soldier, and savant, who, like Paul Louis Courier, carried his Greek books with him to the battle-field, and studied philosophy in the camp. La Tour d'Auvergne was a born student, but unfortunately lived in a time when duty compelled every patriot to be a soldier, so again and again he quitted his study for the battle-field, once generously taking the place of a friend's son, who had been drawn as a conscript. He was killed at the battle of Neuberg, in 1809, and strangely enough his heart was presented some years ago to Garibaldi! This relic of the Breton hero was carried to the field with Garibaldi, and was said to have inspired extraordinary courage and confidence among his soldiers. *Les Origines Gauloises*, by La Tour d'Auvergne, is a work still interesting to all students of Celtic literature. Among less known, but by no means less noble names, may be cited Boulay Patay, born near Chateaubriant, one of the purest characters that shine out of the dark annals of the Revolution. Of fiery eloquence and undaunted courage, he was the stern adversary of the infamous Carrier, and by pure force of character saved thousands from the guillotine. Beside this accomplished pleader and perfect gentleman, Boulay Patay, may be placed a humbler, but no less worthier fellow adversary of

Carrier and his creatures; namely, Leperdit, a poor tailor, born at Pontivy, and raised during the Reign of Terror in the west to the position of mayor of Rennes. When Carrier went to Rennes, determined to repeat the horrors he had just perpetrated at Nantes, he asked for a list of proscriptions, which was drawn up and handed to Leperdit to sign. 'I will not sign it,' he said to the messenger, and immediately tore up the paper. 'You wish to die then?' 'It will, at least, be in the fulfilment of my duty,' he answered. He then went straight to Carrier, who asked for the list. 'I have torn it up,' said Leperdit. 'Who then is master here, you or I?' asked Carrier infuriated. 'Neither of us; the law is master,' replied the tailor. 'You wish me to send you to the guillotine, I suppose?' 'Send me!' said Leperdit. This indomitable spirit staggered Carrier. Some days afterwards there arrived at Rennes a batch of non-juring priests. 'They are beyond the pale of the law,' shouted Carrier. 'They are not beyond the pale of humanity,' said Leperdit. This magnanimous speech became celebrated. 'I am going to Nantes,' said Carrier, 'but I shall return.' 'You will find me here,' the tailor replied firmly. When in 1808 Napoleon went to Nantes, he was struck by the noble figure of Leperdit, and asked his name. 'Leperdit, tailor.' 'What do the people think about me?' asked the Emperor of Leperdit. 'Sire, they admire you.' 'And what else?' 'Sire, they admire you.' 'And after,—do you mean to say they blame me?' 'Yes, Sire, they admire your genius and blame your despotism.' The Emperor tried to win him over, and after an interview left him,

muttering 'Ironheaded.' On the second Restoration, Leperdit refused to take the oath, being a staunch Republican. 'Take care, Sir,' said the Préfet, 'people don't play with the King without paying for it.' 'You are young, Sir, to instruct me,' answered Leperdit. 'Will you or will you not take the oath?' 'Never.' 'You hold your head very high.' 'I have never done anything to make me hold it down,' answered the tailor. In turning over the annals of Breton biography in the Nantes library, I came upon nothing more magnanimous than the figure of the humble tailor of Rennes. His bust is to be seen in the Hôtel de Ville of that city, which is moreover particularly rich in distinguished names.

It is a noteworthy fact that the three Generals who opposed the Coup d'Ētat, and were in consequence imprisoned by Napoleon the Third—Le Flô, Lamoricière, and Bedeau—were all Bretons. Trochu also, who, in spite of detractors, will always be remembered by the just and discriminating as a true patriot, is a Breton born at Nantes. One of the noblest instances of Breton courage and patriotism was given in the war of 1870–1 by the Count de Bouillé, head of an old family, who at the age of sixty, with his son, joined the ranks as volunteers, and were both shot down, one after the other, standard in hand, before Orleans. His son-in-law was also on the spot, and rushing up caught the standard, losing an arm, but happily escaping with his life. The Count himself was a man of much culture, and of great musical talent. Some of his compositions, mostly sacred pieces, for piano or organ, are exceedingly beautiful, and during his life-

time he was at the head of a charming musical and artistic society at Nantes.

When we come to the annals of science, philosophy, and literature, we find a galaxy of brilliant names. That charming and popular writer Émile Souvestre was a Breton, born in the heart of La Basse Bretagne, and may be described as a veritable Lane, who bequeathed the Thousand and One Nights of Breton story to the world. Émile Souvestre in his youth went to Paris, with a play in his pocket, hoping to make his way as a dramatic writer in the capital. He failed, and returned to his native Brittany, to find there a golden mine of poetry and legend which made his fortune and his fame. The Baron de Villemarque has done quite as much in a very different field; and these two writers, with Brizeux, the last of the Breton bards, are the best to be consulted by all intending travellers. Chateaubriant and Lamennais are both natives of St. Malo. Chateaubriant's elegant writings can no longer be said to be the fashion, but they had enormous popularity in their day. The Abbé Lamennais' *Paroles d'un Croyant* —one of the sublimest contributions to modern French literature—is, on the contrary, more popular than ever, editions being issued at all prices from the fourth of a franc, that is to say, twopence-halfpenny and upwards. 100,000 copies were sold the first year of its publication. Such works are undying, and its author, a martyr to the cause of freedom in matters of conscience, is one of the most striking and interesting figures of the age.

Tréguier, in the north of Brittany, is the native

place of the great Orientalist, M. Rénan, and in a literary journal, recently published, he thus describes it:—'Tréguier, my native town, is a city wholly ecclesiastical, foreign to commerce and industry, one vast monastery indeed, penetrated by no rumours from the outer world, where what other men pursue is called vanity, and where what laymen call chimeras are held to be the sole realities of existence.' How well these words describe many another town in Brittany—St. Pol de Léon, for instance!

Two benefactors of humanity may be especially signalised among Breton celebrities—Laennec, born at Quimper, who invented the stethoscope, and is the author of a Treatise on Auscultation, which developes the method of studying the diseases of the chest of his native town. A statue is erected to him opposite the cathedral. Broussais, who is considered the father of the physiological system of medicine in France, was born at St. Malo. Among those now living and working for the public good, I will mention Jules Simon, like Émile Souvestre, a Bas Breton, and whose works, as well as his life, are entirely devoted to the cause of the social and intellectual advancement of his fellow-countrymen. M. Jules Simon's work, 'L'Ouvrière,' is well known, and would alone entitle him to public gratitude.

When we come to Nantes we find the name of Cambronne, one of the indomitable Old Guard of Waterloo; Jules Verne, whose name is so familiar to English lads, and who has, perhaps, more largely contributed to the amusement of the rising generation than any living writer; Dugast-Matifeux, author of many valuable historical works, and one of the best

authorities in France on the history of the Revolution; Élisa Mercœur, girl poetess, of whom Lamartine wrote :—'You know that I have never believed in the existence of poetic talent among women; now I retract this opinion and I predict that this little girl will eclipse us all.' The poor child died in the flower of her youth, and the great poet was not effaced by a woman. Charles X. gave Élisa Mercœur a pension, and a street of her native town is named after her.

Among the curious facts in Breton biography, it may be mentioned that the son of Abailard and Héloise died canon of Nantes cathedral. There are two more names I have yet to mention before finishing this chapter, both of them connected with the good old city of Nantes, and both well worthy the place they hold in Breton biography.

The first is that of Dr. Ange Guépin, who died three years ago, and whose name has become a household word throughout his native department of Morbihan. For forty years and upwards, Dr. Guépin laboured at Nantes as an oculist, a philanthropist, and a writer, and, like many another, he shortened his days by excessive toil. His well-deserved reputation as an oculist brought strangers from all parts of France, and so numerous were his patients that he held two consultations daily, seeing sometimes forty a day. Had he so willed it, he must have died a millionaire; but what he received with one hand from the rich, he gave with the other to the poor, living always with that noble simplicity which was a part of his character. These unremitting labours of his profession are but the phase of a many-sided career;

and whilst assiduously performing the duties to which he was called as leading physician, not only of Nantes but of all Western France, he found time for active political life and literary work as well. Two questions chiefly occupied Dr. Guépin's mind as a politician and a thinker, and in the importance attached to them he will be found in accordance with John Stuart Mill and other advanced minds of the age. The physical and intellectual education of women, and the advancement of the working classes, spiritually, morally, and socially, seemed to him the first ends a reformer should have in view; and, certainly, most people who make themselves acquainted with French life, within and without, will agree with him. In one of his first works, published so long ago as 1835, and which was afterwards developed into the valuable 'Histoire de Nantes,' occur the following passages, which are a key-note to the line of thought and action he afterwards adopted:— 'Whilst a youth,' he writes, when on the subject of education and domestic life generally, 'having entered the world, leads a life essentially active and varied, his young sister, on the contrary, remains at home, sewing and embroidering. She has read little, because her parents have not the time or the inclination to make a selection. We think it a great injustice to leave a young girl unceasingly self-centered and to her own resources; for, having no knowledge of the world, and no other basis upon which to build a future, except personal experience, she conceives a wholly fanciful and mysterious existence, and creates visions impossible to be realised, thus misusing her sensibilities. Such a vicious system of education is

one of the most active agents in bringing about nervous diseases, catalepsy, hysteria and all other maladies engendered by a sedentary life, and a life, moreover, apart from outward influence. Elsewhere, in one of his most important works, 'Philosophie du Dix-neuvième Siècle,' and more especially in his romance, only part of which has been published—'Marie de Beauval'—Dr. Guépin enlarges upon the subject, and anticipates—in clear, simple, yet philosophical language—the gradual progress made with regard to the training and education of girls, and the position of women generally. No abuse escapes him; and a chapter in 'Marie de Beauval,' on dress, might advantageously be printed in flying sheets and posted on the walls of every girls' school throughout France. He was the most inveterate enemy of despotism in any shape; never concealed his opinions; never acted so as to blind his opponents to his real views. But the devotion of the people, of the poor, the ignorant, the helpless, and the unhappy, hemmed him round, built a fortress about his house; and though Cæsarism, embodied in the second Empire, had no stronger foe, he went about unscathed to the last. No government, however despotic, dared to lay hands on the good Guépin. To show what empire such a nature could obtain over the passionate, versatile, impulsive French populace, I will cite one anecdote. Among Dr. Guépin's fellow-students of youth had been Billault, who afterwards abandoned his liberal opinions and became one of the most determined supporters of Napoleon the Third. When Billault died, his partisans insisted on erecting a statue to him at Nantes, much

against Dr. Guépin's wishes, he having, from conscientious motives, broken with his former acquaintance some years before. The fall of the Empire came, and one of the first cries of the excited Nantais population was, 'Down with the statue of Billault!' On the memorable 4th of September, an exasperated multitude of some thousands assembled in the square where the statue stood, determined to pull it down and drag it to the borders of the Loire, there to be cast into the river. Dr. Guépin hastened to the scene, refusing any escort; and making his way to the base of the statue, confronted the infuriated crowd, unarmed and alone.

'I forbid anyone to touch this statue,' he cried in a firm voice. 'I promise you that in four-and-twenty hours it shall be removed; but it shall be safely handed over to Billault's family, and no one shall lay hands on it to-day.'

Those few resolute words were enough. The 'good Guépin' had spoken; and with one accord those excited, hitherto unmanageable masses dispersed. Like children who had been justly reproved, they listened and obeyed; the statue, according to promise, was removed within the appointed time.

Dr. Guépin was named Préfet by the government of September, though, strange to say, he was never elected Deputy. At the general elections of 1869 all Nantes voted for him, but the Imperial candidate was returned by the votes of the agricultural population. With Jesuitical tact, the curés of rural districts had introduced the following argument into their sermons on the Sunday preceding the elections: 'My brothers, you are called upon to select one of two candidates.

Remember that one of these two is he who heals you when you are sick, who opens the eyes of the blind, who not only heals you and makes you see, but is a father to you, dispensing charity to whomsoever needs it. Who will fill his place if your votes send him to Paris?' This unanswerable reasoning was listened to, and the Imperial candidate was returned, not before emissaries of the government had been sent to Nantes, disguised as 'Reds,' and had tried their best to cause an émeute, the onus of which, of course, was to have been cast on the Republicans.

Named Préfet of the Loire Inférieure by the newly-proclaimed Republic of Sept. 4th, Dr. Guépin entered zealously on his new duties, at the same time not neglecting the old. With characteristic modesty, he refused to occupy the handsome and spacious Préfecture, but continued to live in his house in the Rue Contrescarpe, now Rue Guépin, once so renowned for its large-hearted hospitality, its incessant activity, and works of benevolence carried on all the year round.

It was an onerous duty, that of Préfet, when the Prussians were even menacing Brittany, and hundreds of families were flying to Jersey and England, whilst those who remained behind were hiding their treasures and otherwise preparing for the worst. Dr. Guépin, helped in all things by his devoted wife, made tremendous efforts to organize the defences of the west; and his labours in this direction, added to his usual professional duties, and the unspeakable and long-prolonged agonies of that troubled time, no doubt greatly hastened his end. His patriotic heart almost broke on receiving tidings of the fall of Metz, and

from that moment he was never the same man. His charity, his unremitting sympathy with his fellows in misfortune, and his zealous patriotism, were never more fully exercised than during the last troubled years of his life—a period as calamitous to the French nation as history records. But his strength was spent; his work was done; and on the 21st of May, 1873, he died suddenly, aged sixty-eight. The news of his death spread quickly throughout all parts of Brittany, and hundreds and thousands of all ranks hastened to Nantes in order to gaze upon those well-beloved features for the last time. No lying-in-state of hero of world-renowned victories or of sovereign, drew larger, more respectful crowds, than the simple death-chamber of an honest man; and touching it was to see the peasant folks—men, women, and little children—who had made long journeys on foot to bid him adieu. 'Oh, do not refuse me,' said one poor man, who arrived when the doors were shut on the eve of the funeral; 'I have come thirty leagues to see his face and touch his hand for the last time!'

'The veneration of the Bretons for Guépin was a fetichism,' writes one of his biographers. A street in Nantes is called after his name, and his bust is placed in the Museum. I might fill pages with the beautiful thoughts and wise axioms scattered throughout the writings of this indefatigable worker and thinker. Two at least should be written on his tomb, for they may be called the key-note of that pure, high-minded, spotless life. 'Aux plus déshérités, le plus d'amour,' was the motto affixed to his work 'Philosophie du dix-neuvième Siècle,' and 'Aimer, c'est vivre; être aimé, c'est

vivre encore,' are the words with which it ends. But the memory of the good doctor needs no long memorial inscription, no poetising at the hands of biographers. Linked with that of his noble wife—devoted like himself to all that is good, up-lifting, and true—the name of Guépin will be handed down as a household word to the children's children of those who now weep over his grave. As a typical Republican of the moderate type, who was yet called 'Red' by his detractors, and as a Socialist of the highest type, such a character is well worth studying by those who are too apt to think that no good can come out of Republicanism when tinged with the Socialistic idea.

Lastly, may be mentioned Dr. Eugène Bodichon, cousin of the Comte de Bouillé before-named, well known for the most learned and valuable works as yet written upon Algeria, and for the persistent stand made against Imperialism in his writings and in his life. Dr. Bodichon, born of a noble Breton family who numbered many Royalist victims during the term of Carrier's reign in the west, nevertheless may be described as an ardent Republican of the moderate type. His writings —described at length in 'Le Dictionnaire des Contemporains,' and portions of which have been translated into English and other languages—are all characterised by the same spirit animating those of his friends and fellow Bretons, such as Dr. Guépin, Jules Simon, Dugast-Matifeux, namely, a passionate love of liberty and a hatred of Cæsarism, also by an extraordinary amount of political insight. It was not likely that writing so forcible and outspoken as Dr. Bodichon's on the fore-mentioned subjects should escape the

notice of the Imperial police. His proceedings were always jealously watched, and the types of his most important work, 'De l'Humanité,' were broken by order of the authorities in Algiers. The work was printed and published at Brussels, and contains a chapter on Napoleon the First as striking as anything in French biographical literature. But it is chiefly in connection with Algerian affairs that Dr. Bodichon has earned the recognition of his countrymen. He established himself there more than thirty years ago, consequently at a time when zealous workers for the public good were much more needed than they are now. As a physician he worked laboriously, more especially in attending the sick and wounded soldiers and the poor, to whom, like his friend Dr. Guépin, he devoted himself with rare disinterestedness and zeal. His single-minded career in a society by the very nature of things liable to political and social corruption, won for him the title of *L'honnête Bodichon*. In 1848, being appointed corresponding member of the Chamber of Deputies for Algiers, he immediately advised the liberation of the slaves throughout the province of Algeria—which was done. He early drew attention to the necessity of rendering the country more wholesome by planting trees, and he was one of the first planters of the celebrated Eucalyptus, or blue-gum tree, of which there are now numerous forests and plantations, the dreaded African fever disappearing, or at least considerably diminishing, wherever the Eucalyptus springs up. These are among the public services of one who, like his intimate friend, Dr. Guépin, has never sought for advancement or reward, and who,

strange to say, like Dr. Guépin, escaped the worst forms of persecution during the Imperial dynasty. Dr. Bodichon's works on Algeria will always be consulted by those who are studying the history of that colony, past and present; and ordinary travellers in that country will do well to read a little manual of hygiene he wrote many years ago, and which, in the original and in an English translation, has been very widely circulated. In his 'Considérations sur l'Algérie' will be found a chapter exceedingly interesting and valuable at the present time, when public attention is drawn towards Central African exploration, entitled 'Projets d'une Exploration, Politique, Commerciale, et Scientifique, d'Alger à Tombuctoo, par le Sahara.' Though published in the 'Bulletin de la Société de Géographie' so long ago as 1849, this paper is the best résumé on the question as yet published. In his various works, Dr. Bodichon has treated at length on ethnology, and his theories on race are in accordance with those of certain English ethnologists—see M. Henri Martin's 'Etudes d'Archéologie Celtique,' where the theories supported by Dr. Bodichon and his opponents are fully discussed.

With this brief tribute to a few noble names in contemporary French biography, must close these cherished recollections of a Year in Western France.

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